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Montezuma Edition

THE WORKS OF WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

TWENTY-TWO VOLUMES

VOL. III

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L. KOWALSKI.

Philadelphia 1854

HISTORY OF

PHILADELPHIA

AND COUNTY OF PHILADELPHIA
(1682-1854)

BY J. W. FLEMING, ESQ.,
OF PHILADELPHIA.

VOL. III.

PHILADELPHIA: 1854.



Montezuma Edition

HISTORY OF THE

BY

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

EDITED BY

WILFRED HAROLD MUNRO

PROFESSOR OF EUROPEAN HISTORY IN BROWN UNIVERSITY

AND COMPRISING THE NOTES OF THE EDITION BY
JOHN FOSTER KIRK

"Victrices aquilas alium laturus in orbem"

LUCAN, *Pharsalia*, lib. v., v. 238

VOL. III

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

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RESIDENCE IN MEXICO

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CONQUEST OF MEXICO

CHAPTER V

MONTEZUMA SWEARS ALLEGIANCE TO SPAIN—
ROYAL TREASURES—THEIR DIVISION—CHRISTIAN
WORSHIP IN THE TEOCALLI—DISCONTENTS OF
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1520

CORTÉS now felt his authority sufficiently assured to demand from Montezuma a formal recognition of the supremacy of the Spanish emperor. The Indian monarch had intimated his willingness to acquiesce in this, on their very first interview. He did not object, therefore, to call together his principal caciques for the purpose. When they were assembled, he made them an address, briefly stating the object of the meeting. They were all acquainted, he said, with the ancient tradition that the great Being who had once ruled over the land had declared, on his departure, that he should return at some future time and resume his sway. That time had now arrived. The white men had come from the quarter where the sun rises, beyond the ocean, to which the good deity had withdrawn. They were sent by their master to reclaim the obedience of his ancient subjects. For himself,

he was ready to acknowledge his authority. "You have been faithful vassals of mine," continued Montezuma, "during the many years that I have sat on the throne of my fathers. I now expect that you will show me this last act of obedience by acknowledging the great king beyond the waters to be your lord, also, and that you will pay him tribute in the same manner as you have hitherto done to me."¹ As he concluded, his voice was nearly stifled by his emotion, and the tears fell fast down his cheeks.

His nobles, many of whom, coming from a distance, had not kept pace with the changes which had been going on in the capital, were filled with astonishment as they listened to his words and beheld the voluntary abasement of their master, whom they had hitherto revered as the omnipotent lord of Anahuac. They were the more affected, therefore, by the sight of his distress.² His will, they told him, had always been their law. It should be so now; and, if he thought the sovereign of the strangers was the ancient lord of their country, they were willing to acknowledge him as such still. The oaths of allegiance were then adminis-

¹ "Y mucho os ruego, pues á todos os es notorio todo esto, que assí como hasta aquí á mí me habeis tenido, y obedecido por Señor vuestro, de aquí adelante tengais, y obedescáis á este Gran Rey, pues él es vuestro natural Señor, y en su lugar tengais á este su Capitan: y todos los Tributos, y Servicios, que fasta aquí á mí me haciades, los haced, y dad á él, porque yo assimismo tengo de contribuir, y servir con todo lo que me mandaré." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 97.

² "Lo qual todo les dijo llorando, con las mayores lágrimas, y suspiros, que un hombre podia manifestar; é assimismo todos aquellos Señores, que le estaban oiéndo, lloraban tanto, que en gran rato no le pudieron responder." Ibid., loc. cit.

tered with all due solemnity, attested by the Spaniards present, and a full record of the proceedings was drawn up by the royal notary, to be sent to Spain.³ There was something deeply touching in the ceremony by which an independent and absolute monarch, in obedience less to the dictates of fear than of conscience, thus relinquished his hereditary rights in favor of an unknown and mysterious power. It even moved those hard men who were thus unscrupulously availing themselves of the confiding ignorance of the natives; and, though "it was in the regular way of their own business," says an old chronicler, "there was not a Spaniard who could look on the spectacle with a dry eye"! ⁴

³ Solís regards this ceremony as supplying what was before defective in the title of the Spaniards to the country. The remarks are curious, even from a professed casuist: "Y siendo una como insinuacion misteriosa del título que se debió despues al derecho de las armas, sobre justa provocacion, como lo verémos en su lugar: circunstancia particular, que concurrió en la conquista de Méjico para mayor justificacion de aquel dominio, sobre las demas consideraciones generales que no solo hicieron lícita la guerra en otras partes, sino legítima y razonable siempre que se puso en términos de medio necesario para la introduccion del Evangelio." *Conquista*, lib. 4, cap. 3.

⁴ Bernal Díaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 101.—Solís, *Conquista*, loc. cit.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 9, cap. 4.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 87.—Oviedo considers the grief of Montezuma as sufficient proof that his homage, far from being voluntary, was extorted by necessity. The historian appears to have seen the drift of events more clearly than some of the actors in them. "Y en la verdad si como Cortés lo dice, ó escribió, pasó en efecto, mui gran cosa me parece la conciencia y liberalidad de Montezuma en esta su restitution é obediencia al Rey de Castilla, por la simple ó cautelosa informacion de Cortés, que le podia hacer para ello; Mas aquellas lágrimas con que dice, que Montezuma hizo su oracion, é amonestamiento, despojándose de su señorío, é las de aquellos con que les respondieron aceptando lo que les mandaba, y exortaba, y á mi parecer su llanto queria decir, ó enseñar otra cosa de lo que él, y ellos dixéron; porque las obediencias que se suelen dar á los Prín-

The rumor of these strange proceedings was soon circulated through the capital and the country. Men read in them the finger of Providence. The ancient tradition of Quetzalcoatl was familiar to all; and where it had slept scarcely noticed in the memory, it was now revived with many exaggerated circumstances. It was said to be part of the tradition that the royal line of the Aztecs was to end with Montezuma; and his name, the literal signification of which is "sad" or "angry lord," was construed into an omen of his evil destiny.⁵

Having thus secured this great feudatory to the crown of Castile, Cortés suggested that it would be well for the Aztec chiefs to send his sovereign such a gratuity as would conciliate his good will by convincing him of the loyalty of his new vassals.⁶ Montezuma consented that his collectors should visit the principal cities and provinces, attended by a number of Spaniards, to receive the customary tributes, in the name of the Castilian sovereign. In a few weeks most of them returned, bringing back large quantities of gold and silver plate, rich stuffs, and the various commodities in which the taxes were usually paid.

To this store Montezuma added, on his own ac-

cipes con riza, é con cámaras; é diversidad de Música, é leticia, enseñales de placer, se suele hacer; é no con lucto ni lágrimas, é sollozos, ni estando preso quien obedece; porque como dice Marco Varron: Lo que por fuerza se da no es servicio sino robo." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 9.

⁵ Gomara, Crónica, cap. 92.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 256.

⁶ "Pareceria que ellos comenzaban á servir, y Vuestra Alteza tendria mas concepto de las voluntades, que á su servicio mostraban." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 98.

count, the treasure of Axayacatl, previously noticed, some part of which had been already given to the Spaniards. It was the fruit of long and careful hoarding,—of extortion, it may be,—by a prince who little dreamed of its final destination. When brought into the quarters, the gold alone was sufficient to make three great heaps. It consisted partly of native grains; part had been melted into bars; but the greatest portion was in utensils, and various kinds of ornaments and curious toys, together with imitations of birds, insects, or flowers, executed with uncommon truth and delicacy. There were, also, quantities of collars, bracelets, wands, fans, and other trinkets, in which the gold and feather-work were richly powdered with pearls and precious stones. Many of the articles were even more admirable for the workmanship than for the value of the materials; ⁷ such, indeed,—if we may take the report of Cortés to one who would himself have soon an opportunity to judge of its veracity, and whom it would not be safe to trifle with,—as no monarch in Europe could boast in his dominions! ⁸

⁷ Peter Martyr, distrusting some extravagance in this statement of Cortés, found it fully confirmed by the testimony of others. “*Referunt non credenda. Credenda tamen, quando vir talis ad Cæsarem et nostri collegii Indici senatores audeat exscribere. Addes insuper se multa prætermittere, ne tanta recensendo sit molestus. Idem affirmant qui ad nos inde regrediuntur.*” *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 3.

⁸ “Las quales, demas de su valor, eran tales, y tan maravillosas, que consideradas por su novedad, y estrañeza, no tenian precio, ni es de creer, que alguno de todos los Príncipes del Mundo de quien se tiene noticia, las pudiesse tener tales, y de tal calidad.” *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 99.—See, also, Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 9.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 104.

Magnificent as it was, Montezuma expressed his regret that the treasure was no larger. But he had diminished it, he said, by his former gifts to the white men. "Take it," he added, "Malinche, and let it be recorded in your annals that Montezuma sent this present to your master."⁹

The Spaniards gazed with greedy eyes on the display of riches,¹⁰ now their own, which far exceeded all hitherto seen in the New World, and fell nothing short of the *El Dorado* which their glowing imaginations had depicted. It may be that they felt somewhat rebuked by the contrast which their own avarice presented to the princely munificence of the barbarian chief. At least, they seemed to testify their sense of his superiority by the respectful homage which they rendered him, as they poured forth the fulness of their gratitude.¹¹ They were not so scrupulous, however, as to manifest any delicacy in appropriating to themselves the donative, a small part of which was to find its way into the royal coffers. They clamored loudly for an immediate division of the spoil, which the general would have postponed till the tributes from the remoter provinces had been gathered in. The goldsmiths of Azcapozalco were sent

⁹ "Dezilde en vuestros anales y cartas: Esto os embia vuestro buen vassallo Montezuma." Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

¹⁰ "Fluctibus auri
Expleri calor ille nequit."

CLAUDIAN, In Ruf., lib. 1.

¹¹ "Y quando aquello le oyó Cortés, y todos nosotros, estuvimos espantados de la gran bondad, y liberalidad del gran Montezuma, y con mucho acato le quitámos todos las gorras de armas, y le dixímos, que se lo teniamos en merced, y con palabras de mucho amor," etc. Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

for to take in pieces the larger and coarser ornaments, leaving untouched those of more delicate workmanship. Three days were consumed in this labor, when the heaps of gold were cast into ingots and stamped with the royal arms.

Some difficulty occurred in the division of the treasure, from the want of weights, which, strange as it appears, considering their advancement in the arts, were, as already observed, unknown to the Aztecs. The deficiency was soon supplied by the Spaniards, however, with scales and weights of their own manufacture, probably not the most exact. With the aid of these they ascertained the value of the royal fifth to be thirty-two thousand and four hundred *pesos de oro*.¹² Diaz swells it to nearly four times that amount.¹³ But their desire of securing the emperor's favor makes it improbable that the Spaniards should have defrauded the exchequer of any part of its due; while, as Cortés was responsible for the sum admitted in his letter, he would be still less likely to overstate it. His estimate may be received as the true one.

The whole amounted, therefore, to one hundred and sixty-two thousand *pesos de oro*, indepen-

¹² Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 99.—This estimate of the royal fifth is confirmed (with the exception of the four hundred ounces) by the affidavits of a number of witnesses cited on behalf of Cortés to show the amount of the treasure. Among these witnesses we find some of the most respectable names in the army, as Olid, Ordaz, Avila, the priests Olmedo and Diaz,—the last, it may be added, not too friendly to the general. The instrument, which is without date, is in the collection of Vargas Pençe. Probanza fecha á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde, MS.

¹³ "Eran tres montones *de oro*, y pcsado hubo en ellos sobre *seis cientos mil pesos*, como adelante diré, sin la plata, é otras muchas riquezas." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 104.

dently of the fine ornaments and jewelry, the value of which Cortés computes at five hundred thousand ducats more. There were, besides, five hundred marks of silver, chiefly in plate, drinking-cups, and other articles of luxury. The inconsiderable quantity of the silver, as compared with the gold, forms a singular contrast to the relative proportions of the two metals since the occupation of the country by the Europeans.¹⁴ The whole amount of the treasure, reduced to our own currency, and making allowance for the change in the value of gold since the beginning of the sixteenth century, was about six million three hundred thousand dollars, or one million four hundred and seventeen thousand pounds sterling; a sum large enough to show the incorrectness of the popular notion that little or no wealth was found in Mexico.¹⁵ It was, indeed, small in comparison with

¹⁴ The quantity of silver taken from the American mines has exceeded that of gold in the ratio of forty-six to one. (Humboldt, *Essai politique*, tom. iii. p. 401.) The value of the latter metal, says Clemencin, which on the discovery of the New World was only eleven times greater than that of the former, has now come to be sixteen times. (*Memorias de la Real Acad. de Hist.* tom. vi. *Ilust.* 20.) This does not vary materially from Smith's estimate made after the middle of the last century. (*Wealth of Nations*, book 1, chap. 11.) The difference would have been much more considerable, but for the greater demand for silver for objects of ornament and use.

¹⁵ Dr. Robertson, preferring the authority, it seems, of Diaz, speaks of the value of the treasure as 600,000 *pesos*. (*History of America*, vol. ii. pp. 296, 298.) The value of the *peso* is an ounce of silver, or dollar, which, making allowance for the depreciation of silver, represented, in the time of Cortés, nearly four times its value at the present day. But that of the *peso de oro* was nearly three times that sum, or eleven dollars sixty-seven cents. (See *ante*, Book II. chap. 6, note 18.) Robertson makes his own estimate, so much reduced below that of his original, an argument for doubting the existence, in any great quantity, of either gold or silver in the country. In

that obtained by the conquerors of Peru. But few European monarchs of that day could boast a larger treasure in their coffers.¹⁶

The division of the spoil was a work of some difficulty. A perfectly equal division of it among the Conquerors would have given them more than three thousand pounds sterling apiece; a magnificent booty! But one-fifth was to be deducted for the crown. An equal portion was reserved for the general, pursuant to the tenor of his commission. A large sum was then allowed to indemnify him and the governor of Cuba for the charges of the expedition and the loss of the fleet. The garrison of Vera Cruz was also to be provided for. Ample compensation was made to the principal cavaliers. The cavalry, arquebusiers, and crossbowmen each received double pay. So that when the turn of the common soldiers came there remained not more than a hundred *pesos de oro* for each; a sum so insignificant, in comparison with their expectations, that several refused to accept it.¹⁷

Loud murmurs now rose among the men. "Was it for this," they said, "that we left our

accounting for the scarcity of the former metal in this argument, he falls into an error in stating that gold was not one of the standards by which the value of other commodities in Mexico was estimated. *Comp. ante*, vol. i. p. 161.

¹⁶ Many of them, indeed, could boast little or nothing in their coffers. Maximilian of Germany, and the more prudent Ferdinand of Spain, left scarcely enough to defray their funeral expenses. Even as late as the beginning of the next century we find Henry IV. of France embracing his minister, Sully, with rapture when he informed him that, by dint of great economy, he had 36,000,000 livres—about 1,500,000 pounds sterling—in his treasury. See *Mémoires du Duc de Sully*, tom. iii. liv. 27.

¹⁷ "Por ser tan poco, muchos soldados huuo que no lo quisiéron recebir." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 105.

homes and families, perilled our lives, submitted to fatigue and famine, and all for so contemptible a pittance? Better to have stayed in Cuba and contented ourselves with the gains of a safe and easy traffic. When we gave up our share of the gold at Vera Cruz, it was on the assurance that we should be amply requited in Mexico. We have, indeed, found the riches we expected; but no sooner seen, than they are snatched from us by the very men who pledged us their faith!" The malecontents even went so far as to accuse their leaders of appropriating to themselves several of the richest ornaments before the partition had been made; an accusation that receives some countenance from a dispute which arose between Mexia, the treasurer for the crown, and Velasquez de Leon, a relation of the governor, and a favorite of Cortés. The treasurer accused this cavalier of purloining certain pieces of plate before they were submitted to the royal stamp. From words the parties came to blows. They were good swordsmen; several wounds were given on both sides, and the affair might have ended fatally, but for the interference of Cortés, who placed both under arrest.

He then used all his authority and insinuating eloquence to calm the passions of his men. It was a delicate crisis. He was sorry, he said, to see them so unmindful of the duty of loyal soldiers and cavaliers of the Cross, as to brawl like common banditti over their booty. The division, he assured them, had been made on perfectly fair and equitable principles. As to his own share, it was no more than was warranted by his commission. Yet,

if they thought it too much, he was willing to forego his just claims and divide with the poorest soldier. Gold, however welcome, was not the chief object of his ambition. If it were theirs, they should still reflect that the present treasure was little in comparison with what awaited them hereafter; for had they not the whole country and its mines at their disposal? It was only necessary that they should not give an opening to the enemy, by their discord, to circumvent and to crush them. With these honeyed words, of which he had good store for all fitting occasions, says an old soldier,¹⁸ for whose benefit, in part, they were intended, he succeeded in calming the storm for the present; while in private he took more effectual means, by presents judiciously administered, to mitigate the discontents of the importunate and refractory. And, although there were a few of more tenacious temper, who treasured this in their memories against a future day, the troops soon returned to their usual subordination. This was one of those critical conjunctures which taxed all the address and personal authority of Cortés. He never shrunk from them, but on such occasions was true to himself. At Vera Cruz he had persuaded his followers to give up what was but the earnest of future gains. Here he persuaded them to relinquish these gains themselves. It was snatching the prey from the very jaws of the lion. Why did he not turn and rend him?

To many of the soldiers, indeed, it mattered

¹⁸ "Palabras muy melifluas; . . . razones muy bien dichas, que las sabia bien proponer." Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

little whether their share of the booty were more or less. Gaming is a deep-rooted passion in the Spaniard, and the sudden acquisition of riches furnished both the means and the motive for its indulgence. Cards were easily made out of old parchment drum-heads, and in a few days most of the prize-money, obtained with so much toil and suffering, had changed hands, and many of the improvident soldiers closed the campaign as poor as they had commenced it. Others, it is true, more prudent, followed the example of their officers, who, with the aid of the royal jewellers, converted their gold into chains, services of plate, and other portable articles of ornament or use.¹⁹

Cortés seemed now to have accomplished the great objects of the expedition. The Indian monarch had declared himself the feudatory of the Spanish. His authority, his revenues, were at the disposal of the general. The conquest of Mexico seemed to be achieved, and that without a blow. But it was far from being achieved. One important step yet remained to be taken, towards which the Spaniards had hitherto made little progress, —the conversion of the natives. With all the exertions of Father Olmedo, backed by the polemic talents of the general,²⁰ neither Montezuma nor his subjects showed any disposition to abjure the faith of their fathers.²¹ The bloody exercises of

¹⁹ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 105, 106.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 93.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 5.

²⁰ “Ex jureconsulto Cortesius theologus effectus,” says Martyr, in his pithy manner. *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 4.

²¹ According to Ixtlilxochitl, Montezuma got as far on the road to conversion as the *Credo* and the *Ave Maria*, both of which he could

their religion, on the contrary, were celebrated with all the usual circumstance and pomp of sacrifice before the eyes of the Spaniards.

Unable further to endure these abominations, Cortés, attended by several of his cavaliers, waited on Montezuma. He told the emperor that the Christians could no longer consent to have the services of their religion shut up within the narrow walls of the garrison. They wished to spread its light far abroad, and to open to the people a full participation in the blessings of Christianity. For this purpose, they requested that the great *teocalli* should be delivered up as a fit place where their worship might be conducted in the presence of the whole city.

Montezuma listened to the proposal with visible consternation. Amidst all his troubles he had leaned for support on his own faith, and, indeed, it was in obedience to it that he had shown such deference to the Spaniards as the mysterious messengers predicted by the oracles. "Why," said he, "Malinche, why will you urge matters to an extremity, that must surely bring down the ven-

repeat, but his baptism was postponed, and he died before receiving it. That he ever consented to receive it is highly improbable. I quote the historian's words, in which he further notices the general's unsuccessful labors among the Indians: "Cortés comenzó á-dar órden de la conversion de los Naturales, deciéndoles, que pues eran vasallos del Rey de España que se tornasen Cristianos como él lo era, y así se comenzáron á Bautizar algunos aunque fuéron muy pocos, y Motecuhzoma aunque pidió el Bautismo, y sabia algunas de las oraciones como eran el Ave María, y el Credo, se dilató por la Pasqua siguiente, que era la de Resurreccion, y fué tan desdichado que nunca alcanzó tanto bien, y los Nuestros con la dilacion y aprieto en que se viéron, se descuidáron, de que pesó á todos mucho muriese sin Bautismo." Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 87.

geance of our gods, and stir up an insurrection among my people, who will never endure this profanation of their temples?"²²

Cortés, seeing how greatly he was moved, made a sign to his officers to withdraw. When left alone with the interpreters, he told the emperor that he would use his influence to moderate the zeal of his followers, and persuade them to be contented with one of the sanctuaries of the *teocalli*. If that were not granted, they should be obliged to take it by force, and to roll down the images of his false deities in the face of the city. "We fear not for our lives," he added, "for, though our numbers are few, the arm of the true God is over us." Montezuma, much agitated, told him that he would confer with the priests.

The result of the conference was favorable to the Spaniards, who were allowed to occupy one of the sanctuaries as a place of worship. The tidings spread great joy throughout the camp. They might now go forth in open day and publish their religion to the assembled capital. No time was lost in availing themselves of the permission. The sanctuary was cleansed of its disgusting impurities. An altar was raised, surmounted by a crucifix and the image of the Virgin. Instead of the gold and jewels which blazed on the neighboring pagan shrine, its walls were decorated with fresh garlands of flowers; and an old soldier was sta-

²² "O Malinche, y como nos quereis echar á perder á toda esta ciudad, porque estarán mui enojados nuestros Dioses contra nosotros, y aun vuestras vidas no sé en que pararán." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 107.

tioned to watch over the chapel and guard it from intrusion.

When these arrangements were completed, the whole army moved in solemn procession up the winding ascent of the pyramid. Entering the sanctuary, and clustering round its portals, they listened reverentially to the service of the mass, as it was performed by the fathers Olmedo and Diaz. And, as the beautiful *Te Deum* rose towards heaven, Cortés and his soldiers, kneeling on the ground, with tears streaming from their eyes, poured forth their gratitude to the Almighty for this glorious triumph of the Cross.²³

It was a striking spectacle,—that of these rude warriors lifting up their orisons on the summit of this mountain temple, in the very capital of heathendom, on the spot especially dedicated to its unhallowed mysteries. Side by side, the Spaniard

²³ This transaction is told with more discrepancy than usual by the different writers. Cortés assures the emperor that he occupied the temple, and turned out the false gods by force, in spite of the menaces of the Mexicans. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 106.) The improbability of this Quixotic feat startles Oviedo, who nevertheless reports it. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 10.) It looks, indeed, very much as if the general was somewhat too eager to set off his militant zeal to advantage in the eyes of his master. The statements of Diaz, and of other chroniclers, conformably to that in the text, seem far the most probable. Comp. Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 6,—Argensola, Anales, lib. 1, cap. 88.*

* [According to Andrés de Tapia, an eyewitness whose account was not accessible to Prescott, Cortés did use violence in occupying the temple and turning out the false gods. Two chapels, those of Huitzilopochtli and Tezcatlipopoca, were set apart for the use of the Christians. The fact that the image of the first god was found in this chapel during the later siege is easily accounted for. It had been restored to its old position when the invaders were forced to leave the city.—M.]

and the Aztec knelt down in prayer; and the Christian hymn mingled its sweet tones of love and mercy with the wild chant raised by the Indian priest in honor of the war-god of Anahuac! It was an unnatural union, and could not long abide.

A nation will endure any outrage sooner than that on its religion. This is an outrage both on its principles and its prejudices; on the ideas instilled into it from childhood, which have strengthened with its growth, until they become a part of its nature,—which have to do with its highest interests here, and with the dread hereafter. Any violence to the religious sentiment touches all alike, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the noble and the plebeian. Above all, it touches the priests, whose personal consideration rests on that of their religion, and who, in a semi-civilized state of society, usually hold an unbounded authority. Thus it was with the Brahmins of India, the Magi of Persia, the Roman Catholic clergy in the Dark Ages, the priests of Ancient Egypt and Mexico.

The people had borne with patience all the injuries and affronts hitherto put on them by the Spaniards. They had seen their sovereign dragged as a captive from his own palace, his ministers butchered before his eyes, his treasure seized and appropriated, himself in a manner deposed from his royal supremacy. All this they had seen, without a struggle to prevent it. But the profanation of their temples touched a deeper feeling,

of which the priesthood were not slow to take advantage.²⁴

The first intimation of this change of feeling was gathered from Montezuma himself. Instead of his usual cheerfulness, he appeared grave and abstracted, and instead of seeking, as he was wont, the society of the Spaniards, seemed rather to shun it. It was noticed, too, that conferences were more frequent between him and the nobles, and especially the priests. His little page, Orteguilla, who had now picked up a tolerable acquaintance with the Aztec, contrary to Montezuma's usual practice, was not allowed to attend him at these meetings. These circumstances could not fail to awaken most uncomfortable apprehensions in the Spaniards.

Not many days elapsed, however, before Cortés received an invitation, or rather a summons, from the emperor to attend him in his apartment. The general went with some feelings of anxiety and distrust, taking with him Olid, captain of the guard, and two or three other trusty cavaliers. Montezuma received them with cold civility, and, turning to the general, told him that all his pre-

²⁴ "Para mí yo tengo por marabilla, é grande, la mucha paciencia de Montezuma, y de los Indios principales, que assí víeron tratar sus Templos, é Idolos: Mas su disimulacion adelante se mostró ser otra cosa viendo, que vna Gente Extrangera, é de tan poco número, les prendió su Señor é porque formas los hacia tributarios, é se castigaban é quemaban los principales, é se aniquilaban y disipaban sus templos, é hasta en aquellos y sus antecesores estaban. Recia cosa me parece soportarla con tanta quietud; pero adelante, como lo dirá la Historia, mostró el tiempo lo que en el pecho estaba oculto en todos los Indios generalmente." Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 10.

dictions had come to pass. The gods of his country had been offended by the violation of their temples. They had threatened the priests that they would forsake the city if the sacrilegious strangers were not driven from it, or rather sacrificed on the altars in expiation of their crimes.²⁵ The monarch assured the Christians it was from regard for their safety that he communicated this; and, "if you have any regard for it yourselves," he concluded, "you will leave the country without delay. I have only to raise my finger, and every Aztec in the land will rise in arms against you." There was no reason to doubt his sincerity. For Montezuma, whatever evils had been brought on him by the white men, held them in reverence as a race more highly gifted than his own, while for several, as we have seen, he had conceived an attachment, flowing, no doubt, from their personal attentions and deference to himself.

Cortés was too much master of his feelings to show how far he was startled by this intelligence. He replied, with admirable coolness, that he should regret much to leave the capital so precipitately,

²⁵ According to Herrera, it was the Devil himself who communicated this to Montezuma, and he reports the substance of the dialogue between the parties. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 9, cap. 6.) Indeed, the apparition of Satan in his own bodily presence, on this occasion, is stoutly maintained by most historians of the time. Oviedo, a man of enlarged ideas on most subjects, speaks with a little more qualification on this: "Porque la Misa y Evangelio, que predicaban y decian los christianos, le [al Diablo] daban gran tormento; y débese pensar, si verdad es, que esas gentes tienen tanta conversacion y comunicacion con nuestro adversario, como se tiene por cierto en estas Indias, que no le podia á nuestro enemigo placer con los misterios y sacramentos de la sagrada religion christiana." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

when he had no vessels to take him from the country. If it were not for this, there could be no obstacle to his leaving it at once. He should also regret another step to which he should be driven, if he quitted it under these circumstances,—that of taking the emperor along with him.

Montezuma was evidently troubled by this last suggestion. He inquired how long it would take to build the vessels, and finally consented to send a sufficient number of workmen to the coast, to act under the orders of the Spaniards; meanwhile, he would use his authority to restrain the impatience of the people, under the assurance that the white men would leave the land when the means for it were provided. He kept his word. A large body of Aztec artisans left the capital with the most experienced Castilian shipbuilders, and, descending to Vera Cruz, began at once to fell the timber and build a sufficient number of ships to transport the Spaniards back to their own country. The work went forward with apparent alacrity. But those who had the direction of it, it is said, received private instructions from the general to interpose as many delays as possible, in hopes of receiving in the mean time such reinforcements from Europe as would enable him to maintain his ground.²⁶

²⁶ “E Cortés proveió de maestros é personas que entendiesen en la labor de los Navíos, é dixo despues á los Españoles desta manera: Señores y hermanos, este Señor Montezuma quiere que nos vamos de la tierra, y conviene que se hagan Navíos. Id con estos Indios é córtese la madera; é entretanto Dios nos proveherá de gente é socorro; por tanto, poned tal dilacion que parezca que haceis algo y se haga con ella lo quo nos conviene; é siempre me escrivid é avisad que

The whole aspect of things was now changed in the Castilian quarters. Instead of the security and repose in which the troops had of late indulged, they felt a gloomy apprehension of danger, not the less oppressive to the spirits that it was scarcely visible to the eye;—like the faint speck just descried above the horizon by the voyager in the tropics, to the common gaze seeming only a summer cloud, but which to the experienced mariner bodes the coming of the hurricane. Every precaution that prudence could devise was taken to meet it. The soldier, as he threw himself on his mats for repose, kept on his armor. He ate, drank, slept, with his weapons by his side. His horse stood ready caparisoned, day and night, with the bridle hanging at the saddle-bow. The guns were carefully planted so as to command the great avenues. The sentinels were doubled, and every man, of whatever rank, took his turn in mounting guard. The garrison was in a state of siege.²⁷ Such was

tales estáis en la Montaña, é que no sientan los Indios nuestra disimulacion. E así se puso por obra.” (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.) So, also, Gomara. (Crónica, cap. 95.) Diaz denies any such secret orders, alleging that Martin Lopez, the principal builder, assured him they made all the expedition possible in getting three ships on the stocks. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 108.

²⁷ “I may say without vaunting,” observes our stout-hearted old chronicler, Bernal Diaz, “that I was so accustomed to this way of life, that since the conquest of the country I have never been able to lie down undressed, or in a bed; yet I sleep as sound as if I were on the softest down. Even when I make the rounds of my *encomienda*, I never take a bed with me, unless, indeed, I go in the company of other cavaliers, who might impute this to parsimony. But even then I throw myself on it with my clothes on. Another thing I must add, that I cannot sleep long in the night without getting up to look at the heavens and the stars, and stay awhile in the open air, and this without a bonnet or covering of any sort on my head. And, thanks to God, I have received no harm from it. I mention these things, that

the uncomfortable position of the army when, in the beginning of May, 1520, six months after their arrival in the capital, tidings came from the coast which gave greater alarm to Cortés than even the menaced insurrection of the Aztecs.

the world may understand of what stuff we, the true Conquerors, were made, and how well drilled we were to arms and watching." *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 108.

CHAPTER VI

FATE OF CORTÉS' EMISSARIES—PROCEEDINGS IN THE
CASTILIAN COURT—PREPARATIONS OF VELAS-
QUEZ—NARVAEZ LANDS IN MEXICO—POLITIC
CONDUCT OF CORTÉS—HE LEAVES THE CAPITAL

1520

BEFORE explaining the nature of the tidings alluded to in the preceding chapter, it will be necessary to cast a glance over some of the transactions of an earlier period. The vessel, which, as the reader may remember, bore the envoys Puertocarrero and Montejo with the despatches from Vera Cruz, after touching, contrary to orders, at the northern coast of Cuba, and spreading the news of the late discoveries, held on its way uninterrupted towards Spain, and early in October, 1519, reached the little port of San Lucar. Great was the sensation caused by her arrival and the tidings which she brought; a sensation scarcely inferior to that created by the original discovery of Columbus. For now, for the first time, all the magnificent anticipations formed of the World seemed destined to be realized.

Unfortunately, there was a person in Seville at this time, named Benito Martin, chaplain of Ve-

lasquez, the governor of Cuba. No sooner did this man learn the arrival of the envoys, and the particulars of their story, than he lodged a complaint with the *Casa de Contratacion*,—the Royal India House,—charging those on board the vessel with mutiny and rebellion against the authorities of Cuba, as well as with treason to the crown.¹ In consequence of his representations, the ship was taken possession of by the public officers, and those on board were prohibited from removing their own effects, or anything else, from her. The envoys were not even allowed the funds necessary for the expenses of the voyage, nor a considerable sum remitted by Cortés to his father, Don Martin. In this embarrassment they had no alternative but to present themselves, as speedily as possible, before the emperor, deliver the letters with which they had been charged by the colony, and seek redress for their own grievances. They first sought out Martin Cortés, residing at Medellin, and with him made the best of their way to court.

Charles the Fifth was then on his first visit to Spain after his accession. It was not a long one; long enough, however, to disgust his subjects, and, in a great degree, to alienate their affections. He had lately received intelligence of his election to the imperial crown of Germany. From that hour his eyes were turned to that quarter. His stay in

¹ In the collection of MSS. made by Don Vargas Ponce, former President of the Academy of History, is a Memorial of this same Benito Martin to the emperor, setting forth the services of Velasquez and the ingratitude and revolt of Cortés and his followers. The paper is without date; written after the arrival of the envoys, probably at the close of 1519 or the beginning of the following year.

the Peninsula was prolonged only that he might raise supplies for appearing with splendor on the great theatre of Europe. Every act showed too plainly that the diadem of his ancestors was held lightly in comparison with the imperial bauble in which neither his countrymen nor his own posterity could have the slightest interest. The interest was wholly personal.

Contrary to established usage, he had summoned the Castilian *córtes* to meet at Compostella, a remote town in the north, which presented no other advantage than that of being near his place of embarkation.² On his way thither he stopped some time at Tordesillas, the residence of his unhappy mother, Joanna "the Mad." It was here that the envoys from Vera Cruz presented themselves before him, in March, 1520. At nearly the same time, the treasures brought over by them reached the court, where they excited unbounded admiration.³ Hitherto, the returns from the New World had been chiefly in vegetable products, which, if the surest, are also the slowest sources of wealth. Of gold they had as yet seen but little, and that in its natural state or wrought into the rudest trinkets. The courtiers gazed with astonishment on the large masses of the precious metal, and the delicate manufacture of the various arti-

² Sandoval, indeed, gives a singular reason,—that of being near the coast, so as to enable Chièvres and the other Flemish blood-suckers to escape suddenly, if need were, with their ill-gotten treasures, from the country. *Hist. de Carlos Quinto*, tom. i. p. 203, ed. Pamplona, 1634.

³ See the letter of Peter Martyr to his noble friend and pupil, the Marquis de Mondejar, written two months after the arrival of the vessel from Vera Cruz. *Opus Epist.*, ep. 650.

cles, especially of the richly tinted feather-work. And, as they listened to the accounts, written and oral, of the great Aztec empire, they felt assured that the Castilian ships had at length reached the golden Indies, which hitherto had seemed to recede before them.

In this favorable mood there is little doubt the monarch would have granted the petition of the envoys, and confirmed the irregular proceedings of the Conquerors, but for the opposition of a person who held the highest office in the Indian department. This was Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, formerly dean of Seville, now bishop of Burgos. He was a man of noble family, and had been intrusted with the direction of the colonial concerns on the discovery of the New World. On the establishment of the Royal Council of the Indies by Ferdinand the Catholic, he had been made its president, and had occupied that post ever since. His long continuance in a position of great importance and difficulty is evidence of capacity for business. It was no uncommon thing in that age to find ecclesiastics in high civil, and even military, employments. Fonseca appears to have been an active, efficient person, better suited to a secular than to a religious vocation. He had, indeed, little that was religious in his temper; quick to take offence and slow to forgive. His resentments seem to have been nourished and perpetuated like a part of his own nature. Unfortunately, his peculiar position enabled him to display them towards some of the most illustrious men of his time. From pique at some real or fancied slight from Colum-

bus, he had constantly thwarted the plans of the great navigator. He had shown the same unfriendly feeling towards the Admiral's son, Diego, the heir of his honors; and he now, and from this time forward, showed a similar spirit towards the Conqueror of Mexico. The immediate cause of this was his own personal relations with Velasquez, to whom a near relative was betrothed.⁴

Through this prelate's representations, Charles, instead of a favorable answer to the envoys, postponed his decision till he should arrive at Coruña, the place of embarkation.⁵ But here he was much pressed by the troubles which his impolitic conduct had raised, as well as by preparations for his voyage. The transaction of the colonial business, which, long postponed, had greatly accumulated on his hands, was reserved for the last week in Spain. But the affairs of the "young admiral" consumed so large a portion of this, that he had no time to give to those of Cortés, except, indeed, to instruct the board at Seville to remit to the envoys so much of their funds as was required to defray the charges of the voyage. On the 16th of May, 1520, the impatient monarch bade adieu to his distracted kingdom, without one attempt to settle the dispute between his belligerent vassals in the New World, and without an effort to pro-

⁴ Zuñiga, *Anales eclesiásticos y seculares de Sevilla* (Madrid, 1677), fol. 414.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 14; lib. 9, cap. 17, et alibi.

⁵ Velasquez, it appears, had sent home an account of the doings of Cortés and of the vessel which touched with the treasures at Cuba, as early as October, 1519. *Carta de Velasquez al Lic. Figueroa*, MS., Nov. 17, 1519.

mote the magnificent enterprise which was to secure to him the possession of an empire. What a contrast to the policy of his illustrious predecessors, Ferdinand and Isabella!⁶

The governor of Cuba, meanwhile, without waiting for support from home, took measures for redress into his own hands. We have seen in a preceding chapter how deeply he was moved by the reports of the proceedings of Cortés, and of the treasures which his vessel was bearing to Spain. Rage, mortification, disappointed avarice, distracted his mind. He could not forgive himself for trusting the affair to such hands. On the very week in which Cortés had parted from him to take charge of the fleet, a *capitulation* had been signed by Charles the Fifth, conferring on Velasquez the title of *adelantado*, with great augmentation of his original powers.⁷ The governor resolved, without loss of time, to send such a force to the Mexican coast as should enable him to assert his new authority to its full extent and to take vengeance on his rebellious officer. He began his preparations as early as October.⁸ At first he

* "With loud music from clarions and flutes, and with great demonstration of joy, they weighed anchor and unfurled their sails to the wind, leaving unhappy Spain oppressed with sorrows and misfortunes." Sandoval, Hist. de Carlos Quinto, tom. i. p. 219.

⁷ The instrument was dated at Barcelona, Nov. 13, 1518. Cortés left St. Jago the 18th of the same month. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 11.

⁸ Gomara (Crónica, cap. 96) and Robertson (History of America, vol. ii. p. 304, 466) consider that the new dignity of *adelantado* stimulated the governor to this enterprise. By a letter of his own writing in the Muñoz collection, it appears he had begun operations some months previous to his receiving notice of his appointment. Carta de Velasquez al Señor de Xêvres, Isla Fernandina, MS., Octubre 12, 1519.

proposed to assume the command in person. But his unwieldy size, which disqualified him for the fatigues incident to such an expedition, or, according to his own account, tenderness for his Indian subjects, then wasted by an epidemic, induced him to devolve the command on another.⁹

The person whom he selected was a Castilian hidalgo, named Pánfilo de Narvaez. He had assisted Velasquez in the reduction of Cuba, where his conduct cannot be wholly vindicated from the charge of inhumanity which too often attaches to the early Spanish adventurers. From that time he continued to hold important posts under the government, and was a decided favorite with Velasquez. He was a man of some military capacity, though negligent and lax in his discipline. He possessed undoubted courage, but it was mingled with an arrogance, or rather overweening confidence in his own powers, which made him deaf to the suggestions of others more sagacious than himself. He was altogether deficient in that prudence and calculating foresight demanded in a leader who was to cope with an antagonist like Cortés.¹⁰

The governor and his lieutenant were unwearied in their efforts to assemble an army. They visited every considerable town in the island, fitting out vessels, laying in stores and ammunition, and encouraging volunteers to enlist by liberal promises.

⁹ Carta de Velasquez al Lic. Figueroa, MS., Nov. 17, 1519.

¹⁰ The person of Narvaez is thus whimsically described by Diaz: "He was tall, stout-limbed, with a large head and red beard, an agreeable presence, a voice deep and sonorous, as if it rose from a cavern. He was a good horseman and valiant." *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 205.

But the most effectual bounty was the assurance of the rich treasures that awaited them in the golden regions of Mexico. So confident were they in this expectation, that all classes and ages vied with one another in eagerness to embark in the expedition, until it seemed as if the whole white population would desert the island and leave it to its primitive occupants.¹¹

The report of these proceedings soon spread through the Islands, and drew the attention of the Royal Audience of St. Domingo. This body was intrusted, at that time, not only with the highest judicial authority in the colonies, but with a civil jurisdiction, which, as "the Admiral" complained, encroached on his own rights. The tribunal saw with alarm the proposed expedition of Velasquez, which, whatever might be its issue in regard to the parties, could not fail to compromise the interests of the crown. They chose accordingly one of their number, the licentiate Ayllon, a man of prudence and resolution, and despatched him to Cuba, with instructions to interpose his authority, and stay, if possible, the proceedings of Velasquez.¹²

On his arrival, he found the governor in the western part of the island, busily occupied in getting the fleet ready for sea. The licentiate explained to him the purport of his mission, and the views entertained of the proposed enterprise by

¹¹ The danger of such a result is particularly urged in a memorandum of the licentiate Ayllon. Carta al Emperador Guaniguanico, Marzo 4, 1520, MS.

¹² Proceso y Pesquisa hecha por la Real Audiencia de la Española, Santo Domingo, Diciembre 24, 1519, MS.

the Royal Audience. The conquest of a powerful country like Mexico required the whole force of the Spaniards, and, if one half were employed against the other, nothing but ruin could come of it. It was the governor's duty, as a good subject, to forego all private animosities, and to sustain those now engaged in the great work by sending them the necessary supplies. He might, indeed, proclaim his own powers and demand obedience to them. But, if this were refused, he should leave the determination of his dispute to the authorized tribunals, and employ his resources in prosecuting discovery in another direction, instead of hazarding all by hostilities with his rival.

This admonition, however sensible and salutary, was not at all to the taste of the governor. He professed, indeed, to have no intention of coming to hostilities with Cortés. He designed only to assert his lawful jurisdiction over territories discovered under his own auspices. At the same time, he denied the right of Ayllon or of the Royal Audience to interfere in the matter. Narvaez was still more refractory, and, as the fleet was now ready, proclaimed his intention to sail in a few hours. In this state of things, the licentiate, baffled in his first purpose of staying the expedition, determined to accompany it in person, that he might prevent, if possible, by his presence, an open rupture between the parties.¹³

The squadron consisted of eighteen vessels, large and small. It carried nine hundred men,

¹³ Parecer del Lic. Ayllon al Adelantado Diego Velasquez, Isla Fernandina, 1520, MS.

eighty of whom were cavalry, eighty more arquebusiers, one hundred and fifty crossbowmen, with a number of heavy guns, and a large supply of ammunition and military stores. There were, besides, a thousand Indians, natives of the island, who went, probably, in a menial capacity.¹⁴ So gallant an armada—with one exception,¹⁵—never before rode in the Indian seas. None to compare with it had ever been fitted out in the Western World.

Leaving Cuba early in March, 1520, Narvaez held nearly the same course as Cortés, and running down what was then called the “island of Yucatan,”¹⁶ after a heavy tempest, in which some of his smaller vessels foundered, anchored, April 23, off San Juan de Ulua. It was the place where Cortés, also, had first landed; the sandy waste covered by the present city of Vera Cruz.

Here the commander met with a Spaniard, one of those sent by the general from Mexico to ascertain the resources of the country, especially its mineral products. This man came on board the fleet, and from him the Spaniards gathered the particulars of all that had occurred since the departure of the envoys from Vera Cruz,—the march into the interior, the bloody battles with

¹⁴ *Relacion del Lic. Ayllon, Santo Domingo, 30 de Agosto, 1520, MS.*—*Proceso y Pesquisa por la Real Audiencia, MS.*—According to Díaz, the ordnance amounted to twenty cannon. *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 109.

¹⁵ The great fleet under Ovando, 1501, in which Cortés had intended to embark for the New World. *Herrera, Hist. general*, dec. 1, lib. 4, cap. 11.

¹⁶ “De allí seguimos el viage por toda la costa de la Isla de Yucatan.” *Relacion del Lic. Ayllon, MS.*

the Tlascalans, the occupation of Mexico, the rich treasures found in it, and the seizure of the monarch, by means of which, concluded the soldier, "Cortés rules over the land like its own sovereign, so that a Spaniard may travel unarmed from one end of the country to the other, without insult or injury."¹⁷ His audience listened to this marvelous report in speechless amazement, and the loyal indignation of Narvaez waxed stronger and stronger, as he learned the value of the prize which had been snatched from his employer.

He now openly proclaimed his intention to march against Cortés and punish him for his rebellion. He made this vaunt so loudly, that the natives, who had flocked in numbers to the camp, which was soon formed on shore, clearly comprehended that the new-comers were not friends, but enemies, of the preceding. Narvaez determined, also,—though in opposition to the counsel of the Spaniard, who quoted the example of Cortés,—to establish a settlement on this unpromising spot; and he made the necessary arrangements to organize a municipality. He was informed by the soldier of the existence of the neighboring colony at Villa Rica, commanded by Sandoval, and consisting of a few invalids, who,

¹⁷ "La cual tierra sabe é ha visto este testigo, que el dicho Hernando Cortés tiene pacífica, é le sirven é obedecen todos los Indios; é que cree este testigo que lo hacen por cabsa que el dicho Hernando Cortés tiene preso á un Cacique que dicen Montesuma, que es Señor de lo mas de la tierra, á lo que este testigo alcanza, al cual los Indios obedecen, é facen lo que les manda, é los Cristianos andan por toda esta tierra seguros, é un solo Cristiano la ha atravesado toda sin temor." *Processo y Pesquiza hecha por la Real Audiencia de la Española*, MS.

he was assured, would surrender on the first summons. Instead of marching against the place, however, he determined to send a peaceful embassy to display his powers and demand the submission of the garrison.¹⁸

These successive steps gave serious displeasure to Ayllon, who saw they must lead to inevitable collision with Cortés. But it was in vain he remonstrated and threatened to lay the proceedings of Narvaez before the government. The latter, chafed by his continued opposition and sour rebuke, determined to rid himself of a companion who acted as a spy on his movements. He caused him to be seized and sent back to Cuba. The licentiate had the address to persuade the captain of the vessel to change her destination for St. Domingo; and, when he arrived there, a formal report of his proceedings, exhibiting in strong colors the disloyal conduct of the governor and his lieutenant, was prepared, and despatched by the Royal Audience to Spain.¹⁹

Sandoval meanwhile had not been inattentive to the movements of Narvaez. From the time of his first appearance on the coast, that vigilant officer, distrusting the object of the armament, had kept his eye on him. No sooner was he apprised of the landing of the Spaniards, than the commander of

¹⁸ Relacion del Lic. Ayllon, MS.—Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.

¹⁹ This report is to be found among the MSS. of Vargas Ponçe, in the archives of the Royal Academy of History. It embraces a hundred and ten folio pages, and is entitled "El Proceso y Pesquiza hecha por la Real Audiencia de la Española é tierra nuevamente descubierta. Para el Consejo de su Majestad."

Villa Rica sent off his few disabled soldiers to a place of safety in the neighborhood. He then put his works in the best posture of defence that he could, and prepared to maintain the place to the last extremity. His men promised to stand by him, and, the more effectually to fortify the resolution of any who might falter, he ordered a gallows to be set up in a conspicuous part of the town! The constancy of his men was not put to the trial.

The only invaders of the place were a priest, a notary, and four other Spaniards, selected for the mission, already noticed, by Narvaez. The ecclesiastic's name was Guevara. On coming before Sandoval, he made him a formal address, in which he pompously enumerated the services and claims of Velasquez, taxed Cortés and his adherents with rebellion, and demanded of Sandoval to tender his submission, as a loyal subject, to the newly constituted authority of Narvaez.

The commander of La Villa Rica was so much incensed at this unceremonious mention of his companions in arms that he assured the reverend envoy that nothing but respect for his cloth saved him from the chastisement he merited. Guevara now waxed wroth in his turn, and called on the notary to read the proclamation. But Sandoval interposed, promising that functionary that if he attempted to do so, without first producing a warrant of his authority from the crown, he should be soundly flogged. Guevara lost all command of himself at this, and, stamping on the ground, repeated his orders in a more peremptory tone than before. Sandoval was not a man of many words.

He simply remarked that the instrument should be read to the general himself in Mexico. At the same time, he ordered his men to procure a number of sturdy *tamanes*, or Indian porters, on whose backs the unfortunate priest and his companions were bound like so many bales of goods. They were then placed under a guard of twenty Spaniards, and the whole caravan took its march for the capital. Day and night they travelled, stopping only to obtain fresh relays of carriers; and as they passed through populous towns, forests, and cultivated fields, vanishing as soon as seen, the Spaniards, bewildered by the strangeness of the scene, as well as of their novel mode of conveyance, hardly knew whether they were awake or in a dream. In this way, at the end of the fourth day, they reached the Tezcucan lake in view of the Aztec capital.²⁰

Its inhabitants had already been made acquainted with the fresh arrival of white men on the coast. Indeed, directly on their landing, intelligence had been communicated to Montezuma, who is said (it does not seem probable) to have concealed it some days from Cortés.²¹ At length, inviting him to an interview, he told him there was no longer any obstacle to his leaving the country, as a fleet was ready for him. To the inquiries of

²⁰ "E iban espantados de que veian tâtas ciudades y pueblos grandes, que les traian de comer, y vnos los dexavan, y otros los tomavan, y andar por su camino. Dizé que iban pensando si era en cantamiento, ó sueño." Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 111. —Demanda de Zavallos, MS.

²¹ "Ya auia tres dias que lo sabia el Montezuma, y Cortés no sabia cosa ninguna." Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 110.

the astonished general, Montezuma replied by pointing to a hieroglyphical map sent him from the coast, on which the ships, the Spaniards themselves, and their whole equipment were minutely delineated. Cortés, suppressing all emotions but those of pleasure, exclaimed, "Blessed be the Redeemer for his mercies!" On returning to his quarters, the tidings were received by the troops with loud shouts, the firing of cannon, and other demonstrations of joy. They hailed the newcomers as a reinforcement from Spain. Not so their commander. From the first, he suspected them to be sent by his enemy, the governor of Cuba. He communicated his suspicions to his officers, through whom they gradually found their way among the men. The tide of joy was instantly checked. Alarming apprehensions succeeded, as they dwelt on the probability of this suggestion and on the strength of the invaders. Yet their constancy did not desert them; and they pledged themselves to remain true to their cause, and, come what might, to stand by their leader. It was one of those occasions that proved the entire influence which Cortés held over these wild adventurers. All doubts were soon dispelled by the arrival of the prisoners from Villa Rica.

One of the convoy, leaving the party in the suburbs, entered the city, and delivered a letter to the general from Sandoval, acquainting him with all the particulars. Cortés instantly sent to the prisoners, ordered them to be released, and furnished them with horses to make their entrance

into the capital,—a more creditable conveyance than the backs of tamanes. On their arrival, he received them with marked courtesy, apologized for the rude conduct of his officers, and seemed desirous by the most assiduous attentions to soothe the irritation of their minds. He showed his good will still further by lavishing presents on Guevara and his associates, until he gradually wrought such a change in their dispositions that from enemies he converted them into friends, and drew forth many important particulars respecting not merely the designs of their leader, but the feelings of his army. The soldiers, in general, they said, far from desiring a rupture with those of Cortés, would willingly co-operate with them, were it not for their commander. They had no feelings of resentment to gratify. Their object was gold. The personal influence of Narvaez was not great, and his arrogance and penurious temper had already gone far to alienate from him the affections of his followers. These hints were not lost on the general.

He addressed a letter to his rival in the most conciliatory terms. He besought him not to proclaim their animosity to the world, and, by kindling a spirit of insubordination in the natives, unsettle all that had been so far secured. A violent collision must be prejudicial even to the victor, and might be fatal to both. It was only in union that they could look for success. He was ready to greet Narvaez as a brother in arms, to share with him the fruits of conquest, and, if he could produce a royal commission, to submit to his au-

thority. Cortés well knew he had no such commission to show.²²

Soon after the departure of Guevara and his comrades,²³ the general determined to send a special envoy of his own. The person selected for this delicate office was Father Olmedo, who, through the campaign, had shown a practical good sense, and a talent for affairs, not always to be found in a person of his spiritual calling. He was intrusted with another epistle to Narvaez, of similar import with the preceding. Cortés wrote, also, to the licentiate Ayllon, with whose departure he was not acquainted, and to Andres de Duero, former secretary of Velasquez, and his own friend, who had come over in the present fleet. Olmedo was instructed to converse with these persons in private, as well as with the principal officers and soldiers, and, as far as possible, to infuse into them a spirit of accommodation. To give greater weight to his arguments, he was furnished with a liberal supply of gold.

During this time, Narvaez had abandoned his original design of planting a colony on the sea-coast, and had crossed the country to Cempoalla, where he had taken up his quarters. He was here when Guevara returned and presented the letter of Cortés.

Narvaez glanced over it with a look of contempt,

²² Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 117–120.

²³ "Our commander said so many kind things to them," says Diaz, "and *anointed their fingers* so plentifully with gold, that, though they came like roaring lions, they went home perfectly tame!" Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 111.

which was changed into one of stern displeasure as his envoy enlarged on the resources and formidable character of his rival, counselling him by all means to accept his proffers of amity. A different effect was produced on the troops, who listened with greedy ears to the accounts given of Cortés, his frank and liberal manners, which they involuntarily contrasted with those of their own commander, the wealth in his camp, where the humblest private could stake his ingot and chain of gold at play, where all revelled in plenty, and the life of the soldier seemed to be one long holiday. Guevara had been admitted only to the sunny side of the picture.

The impression made by these accounts was confirmed by the presence of Olmedo. The ecclesiastic delivered his missives, in like manner, to Narvaez, who ran through their contents with feelings of anger which found vent in the most opprobrious invectives against his rival; while one of his captains, named Salvatierra, openly avowed his intention to cut off the rebel's ears and broil them for his breakfast!²⁴ Such impotent sallies did not alarm the stout-hearted friar, who soon entered into communication with many of the officers and soldiers, whom he found better inclined to an accommodation. His insinuating eloquence, backed by his liberal largesses, gradually opened a way into their hearts, and a party was formed under the very eye of their chief, better affected to his rival's interests than to his own. The intrigue could not be conducted so secretly as wholly to

²⁴ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 112.

elude the suspicions of Narvaez, who would have arrested Olmedo and placed him under confinement, but for the interposition of Duero. He put a stop to his further machinations by sending him back again to his master. But the poison was left to do its work.

Narvaez made the same vaunt as at his landing, of his design to march against Cortés and apprehend him as a traitor. The Cempoallans learned with astonishment that their new guests, though the countrymen, were enemies of their former. Narvaez, also, proclaimed his intention to release Montezuma from captivity and restore him to his throne. It is said he received a rich present from the Aztec emperor, who entered into a correspondence with him.²⁵ That Montezuma should have treated him with his usual munificence, supposing him to be the friend of Cortés, is very probable. But that he should have entered into a secret communication, hostile to the general's interests, is too repugnant to the whole tenor of his conduct to be lightly admitted.

These proceedings did not escape the watchful eye of Sandoval. He gathered the particulars partly from deserters who fled to Villa Rica, and partly from his own agents, who in the disguise of natives mingled in the enemy's camp. He sent a

²⁵ Ibid., cap. 111.—Oviedo says that Montezuma called a council of his nobles, in which it was decided to let the troops of Narvaez into the capital, and then to crush them at one blow, with those of Cortés! (*Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33. cap. 47.) Considering the awe in which the latter alone were held by the Mexicans, a more improbable tale could not be devised. But nothing is too improbable for history,—though, according to Boileau's Maxim, it may be for fiction.

full account of them to Cortés, acquainted him with the growing defection of the Indians, and urged him to take speedy measures for the defence of Villa Rica if he would not see it fall into the enemy's hands. The general felt that it was time to act.

Yet the selection of the course to be pursued was embarrassing in the extreme. If he remained in Mexico and awaited there the attack of his rival, it would give the latter time to gather round him the whole forces of the empire, including those of the capital itself, all willing, no doubt, to serve under the banners of a chief who proposed the liberation of their master. The odds were too great to be hazarded.

If he marched against Narvaez, he must either abandon the city and the emperor, the fruit of all his toils and triumphs, or, by leaving a garrison to hold them in awe, must cripple his strength, already far too weak to cope with that of his adversary. Yet on this latter course he decided. He trusted less, perhaps, to an open encounter of arms than to the influence of his personal address and previous intrigues, to bring about an amicable arrangement. But he prepared himself for either result.

In a preceding chapter it was mentioned that Velasquez de Leon was sent with a hundred and fifty men to plant a colony on one of the great rivers emptying into the Mexican Gulf. Cortés, on learning the arrival of Narvaez, had despatched a messenger to his officer, to acquaint him with the fact and to arrest his further progress. But Ve-

lasquez had already received notice of it from Narvaez himself, who, in a letter written soon after his landing, had adjured him in the name of his kinsman, the governor of Cuba, to quit the banners of Cortés and come over to him. That officer, however, had long since buried the feelings of resentment which he had once nourished against his general, to whom he was now devotedly attached, and who had honored him throughout the campaign with particular regard. Cortés had early seen the importance of securing this cavalier to his interests. Without waiting for orders, Velasquez abandoned his expedition, and commenced a countermarch on the capital, when he received the general's commands to await him in Cholula.

Cortés had also sent to the distant province of Chinantla, situated far to the southeast of Cholula, for a reinforcement of two thousand natives. They were a bold race, hostile to the Mexicans, and had offered their services to him since his residence in the metropolis. They used a long spear in battle, longer, indeed, than that borne by the Spanish or German infantry. Cortés ordered three hundred of their double-headed lances to be made for him, and to be tipped with copper instead of *itztli*. With this formidable weapon he proposed to foil the cavalry of his enemy.

The command of the garrison in his absence he intrusted to Pedro de Alvarado,—the *Tonatiuh* of the Mexicans,—a man possessed of many commanding qualities, of an intrepid though somewhat arrogant spirit, and his warm personal friend. He inculcated on him moderation and

forbearance. He was to keep a close watch on Montezuma, for on the possession of the royal person rested all their authority in the land. He was to show him the deference alike due to his high station and demanded by policy. He was to pay uniform respect to the usages and the prejudices of the people; remembering that though his small force would be large enough to overawe them in times of quiet, yet should they be once roused it would be swept away like chaff before the whirlwind.

From Montezuma he exacted a promise to maintain the same friendly relations with his lieutenant which he had preserved towards himself. This, said Cortés, would be most grateful to his own master, the Spanish sovereign. Should the Aztec prince do otherwise, and lend himself to any hostile movement, he must be convinced that he would fall the first victim of it.

The emperor assured him of his continued good will. He was much perplexed, however, by the recent events. Were the Spaniards at his court, or those just landed, the true representatives of their sovereign? Cortés, who had hitherto maintained a reserve on the subject, now told him that the latter were indeed his countrymen, but traitors to his master. As such, it was his painful duty to march against them, and, when he had chastised their rebellion, he should return, before his departure from the land, in triumph to the capital. Montezuma offered to support him with five thousand Aztec warriors; but the general declined it, not choosing to encumber him-

self with a body of doubtful, perhaps disaffected, auxiliaries.

He left in garrison, under Alvarado, one hundred and forty men, two-thirds of his whole force.²⁶ With these remained all the artillery, the greater part of the little body of horse, and most of the arquebusiers. He took with him only seventy soldiers, but they were men of the most mettle in the army and his stanch adherents. They were lightly armed, and encumbered with as little baggage as possible. Everything depended on celerity of movement.

Montezuma, in his royal litter borne on the shoulders of his nobles, and escorted by the whole Spanish infantry, accompanied the general to the causeway. There, embracing him in the most cordial manner, they parted, with all the external marks of mutual regard. It was about the middle of May, 1520, more than six months since the entrance of the Spaniards into Mexico. During this time they had lorded it over the land with absolute sway. They were now leaving the city in hostile array, not against an Indian foe, but their own countrymen. It was the beginning of a long career of calamity,—checkered, indeed, by occa-

²⁶ In the Mexican edition of the letters of Cortés, it is called five hundred men. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 122.) But this was more than his whole Spanish force. In Ramusio's version of the same letter, printed as early as 1565, the number is stated as in the text. (Navigationi et Viaggi, fol. 244.) In an instrument without date, containing the affidavits of certain witnesses as to the management of the royal fifth by Cortés, it is said there were one hundred and fifty soldiers left in the capital under Alvarado. (Probanza fecha en la nueva España del mar océano á pedimento de Juan Ochoa de Lexalde, en nombre de Hernando Cortés, MS.) The account in the Mexican edition is unquestionably an error.

sional triumphs,—which was yet to be run before the Conquest could be completed.²⁷

²⁷ Carta de la Villa de Vera Cruz á el Emperador, MS. This letter without date was probably written in 1520.—See, also, for the preceding pages, Probanza fecha á pedimento de Juan Ochoa, MS.,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 9, cap. 1, 21; lib. 10, cap. 1,—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 119, 120,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 112–115,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

CHAPTER VII

CORTÉS DESCENDS FROM THE TABLE-LAND—NEGOTIATES WITH NARVAEZ—PREPARES TO ASSAULT HIM — QUARTERS OF NARVAEZ — ATTACK BY NIGHT—NARVAEZ DEFEATED

1520

TRaversing the southern causeway, by which they had entered the capital, the little party were soon on their march across the beautiful Valley. They climbed the mountain screen which Nature had so ineffectually drawn around it, passed between the huge volcanoes that, like faithless watch-dogs on their posts, have long since been buried in slumber, threaded the intricate defiles where they had before experienced such bleak and tempestuous weather, and, emerging on the other side, descended the western slope which opens on the wide expanse of the fruitful plateau of Cholula.

They heeded little of what they saw on their rapid march, nor whether it was cold or hot. The anxiety of their minds made them indifferent to outward annoyances; and they had fortunately none to encounter from the natives, for the name of Spaniard was in itself a charm,—a better guard than helm or buckler to the bearer.

In Cholula, Cortés had the inexpressible satisfaction of meeting Velasquez de Leon, with the hundred and fifty soldiers intrusted to his command for the formation of a colony. That faithful officer had been some time at Cholula, waiting for the general's approach. Had he failed, the enterprise of Cortés must have failed also.¹ The idea of resistance, with his own handful of followers, would have been chimerical. As it was, his little band was now trebled, and acquired a confidence in proportion.

Cordially embracing their companions in arms, now knit together more closely than ever by the sense of a great and common danger, the combined troops traversed with quick steps the streets of the sacred city, where many a dark pile of ruins told of their disastrous visit on the preceding autumn. They kept the high-road to Tlascala, and, at not many leagues' distance from that capital, fell in with Father Olmedo and his companions on their return from the camp of Narvaez, to which, it will be remembered, they had been sent as envoys. The ecclesiastic bore a letter from that commander, in which he summoned Cortés and his followers to submit to his authority as captain-general of the country, menacing them with condign punishment in case of refusal or delay. Olmedo gave many curious particulars of the state of the enemy's camp. Narvaez he described as

¹ So says Oviedo,—and with truth: “Si aquel capitan Juan Velasquez de Leon no estubiera mal con su pariente Diego Velasquez, é se pasara con los 150 Hombres, que havia llevado á Guaçacalco, á la parte de Pánfilo de Narvaez su cuñado, acabado oviera Cortés su oficio.” Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

puffed up by authority, and negligent of precautions against a foe whom he held in contempt. He was surrounded by a number of pompous, conceited officers, who ministered to his vanity, and whose braggart tones the good father, who had an eye for the ridiculous, imitated, to the no small diversion of Cortés and the soldiers. Many of the troops, he said, showed no great partiality for their commander, and were strongly disinclined to a rupture with their countrymen; a state of feeling much promoted by the accounts they had received of Cortés, by his own arguments and promises, and by the liberal distribution of the gold with which he had been provided. In addition to these matters, Cortés gathered much important intelligence respecting the position of the enemy's force and his general plan of operations.

At Tlascala the Spaniards were received with a frank and friendly hospitality.* It is not said whether any of the Tlascalan allies had accompanied them from Mexico. If they did, they went no farther than their native city. Cortés requested a reinforcement of six hundred fresh troops to attend him on his present expedition. It was readily granted; but, before the army had proceeded many miles on its route, the Indian auxiliaries fell off, one after another, and returned to their city. They had no personal feeling of animosity to gratify in the present instance, as in a war against Mex-

* [Most of the accounts state that Cortés did not himself visit Tlascala, but hastened to the coast by a more southerly route. He sent one of his officers to that city to ask for several *thousand* warriors. Bernal Diaz, Hist. Verd. 91, says, "Embíó Cortés a Tlascala a rogar quatro mil hombres."—M.]

ico. It may be, too, that, although intrepid in a contest with the bravest of the Indian races, they had had too fatal experience of the prowess of the white men to care to measure swords with them again. At any rate, they deserted in such numbers that Cortés dismissed the remainder at once, saying, good-humoredly, "He had rather part with them then than in the hour of trial."

The troops soon entered on that wild district in the neighborhood of Perote, strewn with the wreck of volcanic matter, which forms so singular a contrast to the general character of beauty with which the scenery is stamped. It was not long before their eyes were gladdened by the approach of Sandoval and about sixty soldiers from the garrison of Vera Cruz, including several deserters from the enemy. It was a most important reinforcement, not more on account of the numbers of the men than of the character of the commander, in every respect one of the ablest captains in the service. He had been compelled to fetch a circuit in order to avoid falling in with the enemy, and had forced his way through thick forests and wild mountain-passes, till he had fortunately, without accident, reached the appointed place of rendezvous and stationed himself once more under the banner of his chieftain.²

At the same place, also, Cortés was met by Tobillos, a Spaniard whom he had sent to procure the lances from Chinantla. They were perfectly well

² Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 123, 124.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 115-117.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

made, after the pattern which had been given,—double-headed spears, tipped with copper, and of great length. Tobillos drilled the men in the exercise of this weapon, the formidable uses of which, especially against horse, had been fully demonstrated, towards the close of the last century, by the Swiss battalions, in their encounters with the Burgundian chivalry, the best in Europe.³

Cortés now took a review of his army,—if so paltry a force may be called an army,—and found their numbers were two hundred and sixty-six, only five of whom were mounted. A few muskets and cross-bows were sprinkled among them. In defensive armor they were sadly deficient. They were for the most part cased in the quilted doublet of the country, thickly stuffed with cotton, the *escaupil*, recommended by its superior lightness, but which, though competent to turn the arrow of the Indian, was ineffectual against a musket-ball. Most of this cotton mail was exceedingly out of repair, giving evidence, in its unsightly gaps, of much rude service and hard blows. Few, in this emergency, but would have given almost any price—the best of the gold chains which they wore in tawdry display over their poor habiliments—for a steel morion or cuirass, to take the place of their own hacked and battered armor.⁴

³ But, although irresistible against cavalry, the long pike of the German proved no match for the short sword and buckler of the Spaniard, in the great battle of Ravenna, fought a few years before this, 1512. Machiavelli makes some excellent reflections on the comparative merit of these arms. *Arte della Guerra*, lib. 2, ap. *Opere*, tom. iv. p. 67.

⁴ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 118.—“Tambien quiero dezir la gran necesidad que teniamos de armas, que por vn peto, ó

Under this coarse covering, however, they bore hearts stout and courageous as ever beat in human bosoms. For they were the heroes, still invincible, of many a hard-fought field, where the odds had been incalculably against them. They had large experience of the country and of the natives, and knew well the character of their own commander, under whose eye they had been trained till every movement was in obedience to him. The whole body seemed to constitute but a single individual, in respect of unity of design and of action. Thus its real effective force was incredibly augmented; and, what was no less important, the humblest soldier felt it to be so.

The troops now resumed their march across the table-land, until, reaching the eastern slope, their labors were lightened, as they descended towards the broad plains of the *tierra caliente*, spread out like a boundless ocean of verdure below them. At some fifteen leagues' distance from Cempoalla, where Narvaez, as has been noticed, had established his quarters, they were met by another embassy from that commander. It consisted of the priest, Guevara, Andres de Duero, and two or three others. Duero, the fast friend of Cortés, had been the person most instrumental, originally, in obtaining him his commission from Velasquez. They now greeted each other with a warm embrace, and it was not till after much preliminary conversation on private matters that the secretary disclosed the object of his visit.

capacete, ó casco, ó babera de hierro, dieramos aquella noche quãto nos pidiera por ello, y todo quãto auíamos ganado." Cap. 122.

He bore a letter from Narvaez, couched in terms somewhat different from the preceding. That officer required, indeed, the acknowledgment of his paramount authority in the land, but offered his vessels to transport all, who desired it, from the country, together with their treasures and effects, without molestation or inquiry. The more liberal tenor of these terms was, doubtless, to be ascribed to the influence of Duero. The secretary strongly urged Cortés to comply with them, as the most favorable that could be obtained, and as the only alternative affording him a chance of safety in his desperate condition. "For, however valiant your men may be, how can they expect," he asked, "to face a force so much superior in numbers and equipment as that of their antagonist?" But Cortés had set his fortunes on the cast, and he was not the man to shrink from it. "If Narvaez bears a royal commission," he returned, "I will readily submit to him. But he has produced none. He is a deputy of my rival, Velasquez. For myself, I am a servant of the king; I have conquered the country for him; and for him I and my brave followers will defend it, be assured, to the last drop of our blood. If we fall, it will be glory enough to have perished in the discharge of our duty."⁵

⁵ "Yo les respondí, que no via provision de Vuestra Alteza, por donde le debiese entregar la Tierra; é que si alguna trahia, que la presentasse ante mí, y ante el Cabildo de la Vera Cruz, segun órden, y costumbre de España, y que yo estaba presto de la obedecer, y cumplir; y que hasta tanto, por ningun interese, ni partido haria lo que él decia; ántes yo, y los que conmigo estaban, moriríamos en defensa de la Tierra, pues la habíamos ganado, y tenido por Vuestra Magestad pacífica, y segura, y por no ser Traydores y desleales á nuestro Rey. . . . Considerando, que morir en servicio de mi Rey, y

His friend might have been somewhat puzzled to comprehend how the authority of Cortés rested on a different ground from that of Narvaez; and if they both held of the same superior, the governor of Cuba, why that dignitary should not be empowered to supersede his own officer, in case of dissatisfaction, and appoint a substitute.⁶ But Cortés here reaped the full benefit of that legal fiction, if it may be so termed, by which his commission, resigned to the self-constituted municipality of Vera Cruz, was again derived through that body from the crown. The device, indeed, was too palpable to impose on any but those who chose to be blinded. Most of the army were of this number. To them it seemed to give additional confidence, in the same manner as a strip of painted canvas, when substituted, as it has sometimes been, for a real parapet of stone, has been found not merely to impose on the enemy, but to give a sort of artificial courage to the defenders concealed behind it.⁷

por defender, y amparar sus Tierras, y no las dejar usurpar, á mí, y á los de mi Compañía se nos seguía farta gloria." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 125-127.

⁶ Such are the natural reflections of Oviedo, speculating on the matter some years later. "E tambien que me parece donaire, ó no bastante la excusa que Cortés da para fundar é justificar su negocio, ques es decir, que el Narvaez presentase las provisiones que llevaba de S. M. Como si el dicho Cortés oviera ido á aquella tierra por mandado de S. M. ó con mas, ni tanta autoridad como llevaba Narvaez; pues que es claro é notorio, que el Adelantado Diego Velasquez, que embió á Cortés, era parte, segun derecho, para le embiar á remover, y el Cortés obligado á le obedecer. No quiero decir mas en esto por no ser odioso á ninguna de las partes." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

⁷ More than one example of this *ruse* is mentioned by Mariana in Spanish history, though the precise passages have escaped my memory.

Duero had arranged with his friend in Cuba, when he took command of the expedition, that he himself was to have a liberal share of the profits. It is said that Cortés confirmed this arrangement at the present juncture, and made it clearly for the other's interest that he should prevail in the struggle with Narvaez. This was an important point, considering the position of the secretary.⁸ From this authentic source the general derived much information respecting the designs of Narvaez, which had escaped the knowledge of Olmedo. On the departure of the envoys, Cortés intrusted them with a letter for his rival, a counterpart of that which he had received from him. This show of negotiation intimated a desire on his part to postpone, if not avoid, hostilities, which might the better put Narvaez off his guard. In the letter he summoned that commander and his followers to present themselves before him without delay, and to acknowledge his authority as the representative of his sovereign. He should otherwise be compelled to proceed against them as rebels to the crown!⁹ With this missive, the vaunting tone of which was intended quite as much for his own troops as the enemy, Cortés dismissed the envoys.

⁸ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 119.

⁹ "E assimismo mandaba, y mandé por el dicho Mandamiento á todas las Personas, que con el dicho Narvaez estaban, que no tubiesen, ni obedeciessen al dicho Narvaez por tal Capitan, ni Justicia; ántes, dentro de cierto término, que en el dicho Mandamiento señalé, pareciessen ante mí, para que yo les dijesse, lo que debian hacer en servicio de Vuestra Alteza: con protestacion, que lo contrario haciendo, procedería contra ellos, como contra Traydores, y aleves, y malos Vasallos, que se rebelaban contra su Rey, y quieren usurpar sus Tierras, y Señoríos." *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 127.

They returned to disseminate among their comrades their admiration of the general, and of his unbounded liberality, of which he took care they should experience full measure, and they dilated on the riches of his adherents, who, over their wretched attire, displayed, with ostentatious profusion, jewels, ornaments of gold, collars, and massive chains winding several times round their necks and bodies, the rich spoil of the treasury of Montezuma.

The army now took its way across the level plains of the *tierra caliente*, on which Nature has exhausted all the wonders of creation; it was covered more thickly than at the present day with noble forests, where the towering cottonwood-tree, the growth of ages, stood side by side with the light bamboo or banana, the product of a season, each in its way attesting the marvellous fecundity of the soil, while innumerable creeping flowers, muffling up the giant branches of the trees, waved in bright festoons above their heads, loading the air with odors. But the senses of the Spaniards were not open to the delicious influences of nature. Their minds were occupied by one idea.

Coming upon an open reach of meadow, of some extent, they were at length stopped by a river, or rather stream, called *Rio de Canoas*, "the River of Canoes," of no great volume ordinarily, but swollen at this time by excessive rains. It had rained hard that day, although at intervals the sun had broken forth with intolerable fervor, affording a good specimen of those alternations of heat and moisture which give such activity to vegeta-

tion in the tropics, where the process of forcing seems to be always going on.

The river was about a league distant from the camp of Narvaez. Before seeking out a practical ford by which to cross it, Cortés allowed his men to recruit their exhausted strength by stretching themselves on the ground. The shades of evening had gathered round; and the rising moon, wading through dark masses of cloud, shone with a doubtful and interrupted light. It was evident that the storm had not yet spent its fury.¹⁰ Cortés did not regret this. He had made up his mind to an assault that very night, and in the darkness and uproar of the tempest his movements would be most effectually concealed.

Before disclosing his design, he addressed his men in one of those stirring, soldierly harangues to which he had recourse in emergencies of great moment, as if to sound the depths of their hearts, and, where any faltered, to reanimate them with his own heroic spirit. He briefly recapitulated the great events of the campaign, the dangers they had surmounted, the victories they had achieved over the most appalling odds, the glorious spoil they had won. But of this they were now to be defrauded; not by men holding a legal warrant from the crown, but by adventurers, with no better title than that of superior force. They had established a claim on the gratitude of their country and their sovereign. This claim was now to be

¹⁰ "Y aun llouia de rato en rato, y entonces salia la Luna, que quando allí llegámos hazia muy escuro, y llouia, y tambien la escuridad ayudó." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.

dishonored, their very services were converted into crimes, and their names branded with infamy as those of traitors. But the time had at last come for vengeance. God would not desert the soldier of the cross. Those whom he had carried victorious through greater dangers would not be left to fail now. And, if they should fail, better to die like brave men on the field of battle, than, with fame and fortune cast away, to perish ignominiously like slaves on the gibbet. This last point he urged home upon his hearers; well knowing there was not one among them so dull as not to be touched by it.

They responded with hearty acclamations, and Velasquez de Leon, and de Lugo, in the name of the rest, assured their commander, if they failed, it should be his fault, not theirs. They would follow wherever he led. The general was fully satisfied with the temper of his soldiers, as he felt that his difficulty lay not in awakening their enthusiasm, but in giving it a right direction. One thing is remarkable. He made no allusion to the defection which he knew existed in the enemy's camp. He would have his soldiers, in this last pinch, rely on nothing but themselves.

He announced his purpose to attack the enemy that very night, when he should be buried in slumber, and the friendly darkness might throw a veil over their own movements and conceal the poverty of their numbers. To this the troops, jaded though they were by incessant marching, and half famished, joyfully assented. In their situation, suspense was the worst of evils. He next dis-

tributed the commands among his captains. To Gonzalo de Sandoval he assigned the important office of taking Narvaez. He was commanded, as *alguacil mayor*, to seize the person of that officer as a rebel to his sovereign, and, if he made resistance, to kill him on the spot.¹¹ He was provided with sixty picked men to aid him in this difficult task, supported by several of the ablest captains, among whom were two of the Alvarados, de Avila, and Ordaz. The largest division of the force was placed under Cristóval de Olid, or, according to some authorities, of Pizarro, one of that family so renowned in the subsequent conquest of Peru. He was to get possession of the artillery, and to cover the assault of Sandoval by keeping those of the enemy at bay who would interfere with it. Cortés reserved only a body of twenty men for himself, to act on any point that occasion might require. The watch-word was *Espíritu Santo*, it being the evening of Whitsunday. Having made these arrangements, he prepared to cross the river.¹²

During the interval thus occupied by Cortés, Narvaez had remained at Cempoalla, passing his days in idle and frivolous amusement. From this

¹¹ The attorney of Narvaez, in his complaint before the crown, expatiates on the diabolical enormity of these instructions. "El dho Fernando Cortés como traidor aleboso, sin apereibir al dho mi partte, con un diabólico pensamto é infernal osadía, en contemtto é menosprecio de V. M. ó de sus provisiones R.s, no mirando ni asattando la lealtad qe debia á V. M., el dho Cortés dió un Mandamientto al dho Gonzalo de Sandobal para que prendiese al dho Pánfilo de Narvaez, é si se defendiese qe lo mattase." Demanda de Zavalllos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.

¹² Oviedo, Hist de las Ind., MS., lib 33, cap. 12, 47.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 1.

he was at length roused, after the return of Duero, by the remonstrances of the old cacique of the city. "Why are you so heedless?" exclaimed the latter; "do you think Malinche is so? Depend on it, he knows your situation exactly, and, when you least dream of it, he will be upon you."¹³

Alarmed at these suggestions and those of his friends, Narvaez at length put himself at the head of his troops, and, on the very day on which Cortés arrived at the River of Canoes, sallied out to meet him. But, when he had reached this barrier, Narvaez saw no sign of an enemy. The rain, which fell in torrents, soon drenched the soldiers to the skin. Made somewhat effeminate by their long and luxurious residence at Cempoalla, they murmured at their uncomfortable situation. "Of what use was it to remain there fighting with the elements? There was no sign of an enemy, and little reason to apprehend his approach in such tempestuous weather. It would be wiser to return to Cempoalla, and in the morning they should be all fresh for action, should Cortés make his appearance."

Narvaez took counsel of these advisers, or rather of his own inclinations. Before retracing his steps, he provided against surprise by stationing a couple of sentinels at no great distance from the river, to give notice of the approach of Cortés. He also detached a body of forty horse in another direction, by which he thought it not improbable the

¹³ "Que hazeis, que estais mui descuidado? pensais que Malinche, y los Teules que trae cósigo, que son assí como vosotros? Pues yo os digo, que quâdo no os cataredes, será aquí, y os matará." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 121.

enemy might advance on Cempoalla. Having taken these precautions, he fell back again before night on his own quarters.

He there occupied the principal *teocalli*. It consisted of a stone building on the usual pyramidal basis; and the ascent was by a flight of steep steps on one of the faces of the pyramid. In the edifice or sanctuary above he stationed himself with a strong party of arquebusiers and crossbowmen. Two other *teocallis* in the same area were garrisoned by large detachments of infantry. His artillery, consisting of seventeen or eighteen small guns, he posted in the area below, and protected it by the remainder of his cavalry. When he had thus distributed his forces, he returned to his own quarters, and soon after to repose, with as much indifference as if his rival had been on the other side of the Atlantic, instead of a neighboring stream.

That stream was now converted by the deluge of waters into a furious torrent. It was with difficulty that a practicable ford could be found. The slippery stones, rolling beneath the feet, gave way at every step. The difficulty of the passage was much increased by the darkness and driving tempest. Still, with their long pikes, the Spaniards contrived to make good their footing,—at least, all but two, who were swept down by the fury of the current. When they had reached the opposite side, they had new impediments to encounter, in traversing a road, never good, now made doubly difficult by the deep mire, and the tangled brush-wood with which it was overrun.

Here they met with a cross, which had been raised by them on their former march into the interior. They hailed it as a good omen; and Cortés, kneeling before the blessed sign, confessed his sins, and declared his great object to be the triumph of the holy Catholic faith. The army followed his example, and, having made a general confession, received absolution from Father Olmedo, who invoked the blessing of Heaven on the warriors who had consecrated their swords to the glory of the Cross. Then rising up and embracing one another, as companions in the good cause, they found themselves wonderfully invigorated and refreshed. The incident is curious, and well illustrates the character of the time,—in which war, religion, and rapine were so intimately blended together. Adjoining the road was a little coppice; and Cortés, and the few who had horses, dismounting, fastened the animals to the trees, where they might find some shelter from the storm. They deposited there, too, their baggage, and such superfluous articles as would encumber their movements. The general then gave them a few last words of advice. “Everything,” said he, “depends on obedience. Let no man, from desire of distinguishing himself, break his ranks. On silence, despatch, and, above all, obedience to your officers, the success of our enterprise depends.”

Silently and stealthily they held on their way, without beat of drum or sound of trumpet, when they suddenly came on the two sentinels who had been stationed by Narvaez to give notice of their approach. This had been so noiseless that the ve-

dettes were both of them surprised on their post, and one only, with difficulty, effected his escape. The other was brought before Cortés. Every effort was made to draw from him some account of the present position of Narvaez. But the man remained obstinately silent; and, though threatened with the gibbet, and having a noose actually drawn round his neck, his Spartan heroism was not to be vanquished. Fortunately, no change had taken place in the arrangements of Narvaez since the intelligence previously derived from Duero.

The other sentinel, who had escaped, carried the news of the enemy's approach to the camp. But his report was not credited by the lazy soldiers whose slumbers he had disturbed. "He had been deceived by his fears," they said, "and mistaken the noise of the storm and the waving of the bushes for the enemy. Cortés and his men were far enough on the other side of the river, which they would be slow to cross in such a night." Narvaez himself shared in the same blind infatuation, and the discredited sentinel slunk abashed to his own quarters, vainly menacing them with the consequences of their incredulity.¹⁴

Cortés, not doubting that the sentinel's report must alarm the enemy's camp, quickened his pace. As he drew near, he discerned a light in one of the lofty towers of the city. "It is the quarters of Narvaez," he exclaimed to Sandoval, "and that light must be your beacon." On entering the

¹⁴ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 128.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 2, 3.

suburbs, the Spaniards were surprised to find no one stirring, and no symptom of alarm. Not a sound was to be heard, except the measured tread of their own footsteps, half drowned in the howling of the tempest. Still they could not move so stealthily as altogether to elude notice, as they defiled through the streets of this populous city. The tidings were quickly conveyed to the enemy's quarters, where in an instant all was bustle and confusion. The trumpets sounded to arms. The dragoons sprang to their steeds, the artillery-men to their guns. Narvaez hastily buckled on his armor, called his men around him, and summoned those in the neighboring *teocallis* to join him in the area. He gave his orders with coolness; for, however wanting in prudence, he was not deficient in presence of mind, or courage.

All this was the work of a few minutes. But in those minutes the Spaniards had reached the avenue leading to the camp. Cortés ordered his men to keep close to the walls of the buildings, that the cannon-shot might pass between the two files.¹⁵ No sooner had they presented themselves before the enclosure, than the artillery of Narvaez opened a general fire. Fortunately, the pieces were pointed so high that most of the balls passed over their heads, and three men only were struck down. They did not give the enemy time to reload. Cortés shouting the watch-word of the night, "*Es-*

¹⁵ "Ya que se acercaban al Aposento de Narvaez, Cortés, que andaba reconociendo, i ordenando á todas partes, dixo á la Tropa de Sandoval: Señores, arrímaos á las dos aceras de la Calle, para que las balas del Artillería pasen por medio, sin hacer daño." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 3.

píritu Santo! Espíritu Santo! Upon them!" in a moment Olid and his division rushed on the artillery-men, whom they pierced or knocked down with their pikes, and got possession of their guns. Another division engaged the cavalry, and made a diversion in favor of Sandoval, who with his gallant little band sprang up the great stairway of the temple. They were received with a shower of missiles,—arrows and musket-balls, which, in the hurried aim, and the darkness of the night, did little mischief. The next minute the assailants were on the platform, engaged hand to hand with their foes. Narvaez fought bravely in the midst, encouraging his followers. His standard-bearer fell by his side, run through the body. He himself received several wounds; for his short sword was no match for the long pikes of the assailants. At length he received a blow from a spear, which struck out his left eye. "*Santa María!*" exclaimed the unhappy man, "I am slain!" The cry was instantly taken up by the followers of Cortés, who shouted "Victory!"

Disabled, and half mad with agony from his wound, Narvaez was withdrawn by his men into the sanctuary. The assailants endeavored to force an entrance, but it was stoutly defended. At length a soldier, getting possession of a torch or firebrand, flung it on the thatched roof, and in a few moments the combustible materials of which it was composed were in a blaze. Those within were driven out by the suffocating heat and smoke. A soldier named Farfan grappled with the wounded commander, and easily brought him to the ground;

when he was speedily dragged down the steps, and secured with fetters. His followers, seeing the fate of their chief, made no further resistance.¹⁶

During this time, Cortés and the troops of Olid had been engaged with the cavalry, and had discomfited them, after some ineffectual attempts on the part of the latter to break through the dense array of pikes, by which several of their number were unhorsed and some of them slain. The general then prepared to assault the other *teocallis*, first summoning the garrisons to surrender. As they refused, he brought up the heavy guns to bear on them, thus turning the artillery against its own masters. He accompanied this menacing movement with offers of the most liberal import; an amnesty for the past, and a full participation in all the advantages of the Conquest. One of the garrisons was under the command of Salvatierra, the same officer who talked of cutting off the ears of Cortés. From the moment he had learned the fate of his own general, the hero was seized with a violent fit of illness which disabled him from further action. The garrison waited only for one discharge of the ordnance, when they accepted the terms of capitulation. Cortés, it is said, received, on this occasion, support from an unexpected auxiliary. The air was filled with the *cocuyos*,—a species of large beetle which emits an intense phosphoric light from its body, strong enough to enable one to read by it. These wandering fires, seen in the darkness of the night, were converted, by the

¹⁶ Demanda de Zavalllos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

excited imaginations of the besieged, into an army with matchlocks! Such is the report of an eye-witness.¹⁷ But the facility with which the enemy surrendered may quite as probably be referred to the cowardice of the commander, and the disaffection of the soldiers, not unwilling to come under the banners of Cortés.

The body of cavalry, posted, it will be remembered, by Narvaez on one of the roads to Cempoalla, to intercept his rival, having learned what had been passing, were not long in tendering their submission. Each of the soldiers in the conquered army was required, in token of his obedience, to deposit his arms in the hands of the alguacils, and to take the oaths to Cortés as Chief Justice and Captain-General of the colony.

The number of the slain is variously reported. It seems probable that not more than twelve perished on the side of the vanquished, and of the victors half that number. The small amount may be explained by the short duration of the action, and the random aim of the missiles in the darkness. The number of the wounded was much more considerable.¹⁸

¹⁷ "Como hazia tan escuro auia muchos cocayos (ansí los llaman en Cuba) que relumbrauan de noche, é los de Narvaez creyéron que era muchas de las escopetas." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 122.

¹⁸ Narvaez, or rather his attorney, swells the amount of slain on his own side much higher. But it was his cue to magnify the mischief sustained by his employer. The collation of this account with those of Cortés and his followers affords the best means of approximation to the truth. "E allí le mattáron quince hombres qe muriéron de las feridas qe les diéron é les quemáron seis hombres del dho Incendio qe despues parecióron las cabezas de ellos quemadas, é pusiéron á sacomano todo quantto ttenian los que benian con el dho mi parte como

The field was now completely won. A few brief hours had sufficed to change the condition of Cortés from that of a wandering outlaw at the head of a handful of needy adventurers, a rebel with a price upon his head, to that of an independent chief, with a force at his disposal strong enough not only to secure his present conquests, but to open a career for still loftier ambition. While the air rung with the acclamations of the soldiery, the victorious general, assuming a deportment corresponding with his change of fortune, took his seat in a chair of state, and, with a rich, embroidered mantle thrown over his shoulders, received, one by one, the officers and soldiers, as they came to tender their congratulations. The privates were graciously permitted to kiss his hand. The officers he noticed with words of compliment or courtesy; and when Duero, Bermudez, the treasurer, and some others of the vanquished party, his old friends, presented themselves, he cordially embraced them.¹⁹

Narvaez, Salvatierra, and two or three of the other hostile leaders were led before him in chains. It was a moment of deep humiliation for the

si fueran Moros y al dho mi partte robáron é saqueáron todos sus vienes, oro, é Platta é Joyas." Demanda de Zavillos en nombre de Narvaez, MS.

¹⁹ "Entre ellos venia Andres de Duero, y Agustin Bermudez, y muchos amigos de nuestro Capitã, y assí como veniã, ivan á besar las manos á Cortés, q̃ estaua sentado en vna silla de caderas, con vna ropa larga de color como narãjada, cõ sus armas debaxo, acõpañado de nosotros. Pues ver la gracia con que les hablaua, y abraçaua, y las palabras de tãtos cumplimietos que les dezia, era cosa de ver que alegre estaua: y tenia mucha razon de verse en aquel pũto tan señor, y pujãte: y assí como le besauã la mano, se fuérõ cada vno á su posada." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 122.

former commander, in which the anguish of the body, however keen, must have been forgotten in that of the spirit. "You have great reason, Señor Cortés," said the discomfited warrior, "to thank Fortune for having given you the day so easily, and put me in your power." "I have much to be thankful for," replied the general; "but for my victory over you, I esteem it as one of the least of my achievements since my coming into the country!"²⁰ He then ordered the wounds of the prisoners to be cared for, and sent them under a strong guard to Vera Cruz.

Notwithstanding the proud humility of his reply, Cortés could scarcely have failed to regard his victory over Narvaez as one of the most brilliant achievements in his career. With a few scores of followers, badly clothed, worse fed, wasted by forced marches, under every personal disadvantage, deficient in weapons and military stores, he had attacked in their own quarters, routed, and captured the entire force of the enemy, thrice his superior in numbers, well provided with cavalry and artillery, admirably equipped, and complete in all the munitions of war! The amount of troops engaged on either side was, indeed, inconsiderable. But the proportions are not affected by this; and the relative strength of the parties made a result

²⁰ Ibid., loc. cit.—"Dixose que como Narvaez vido á Cortés estando así preso le dixo: Señor Cortés, tened en mucho la ventura que habeis tenido, é lo mucho que habeis hecho en tener mi persona, ó en tomar mi persona. E que Cortés le respondió, é dixo: Lo menos que yo he hecho en esta tierra donde estais, es haberos prendido: é luego le hizo poner á buen recaudo é le tubo mucho tiempo preso." Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

so decisive one of the most remarkable events in the annals of war.

It is true there were some contingencies on which the fortunes of the day depended, that could not be said to be entirely within his control. Something was the work of chance. If Velasquez de Leon, for example, had proved false, the expedition must have failed.²¹ If the weather, on the night of the attack, had been fair, the enemy would have had certain notice of his approach, and been prepared for it. But these are the chances that enter more or less into every enterprise. He is the skilful general who knows how to turn them to account; to win the smiles of Fortune, and make even the elements fight on his side.

If Velasquez de Leon was, as it proved, the very officer whom the general should have trusted with the command, it was his sagacity which originally discerned this and selected him for it. It was his address that converted this dangerous foe into a friend, and one so fast that in the hour of need he

²¹ Oviedo says that military men discussed whether Velasquez de Leon should have obeyed the commands of Cortés rather than those of his kinsman, the governor of Cuba. They decided in favor of the former, on the ground of his holding his commission immediately from him. "Visto he platicar sobre esto á caballeros é personas militares sobre si este Juan Velasquez de Leon hizo lo que debia, en acudir ó no á Diego Velasquez, ó al Pánfilo en su nombre; E combienen los veteranos mílites, é á mi parecer determinan bien la question, en que si Juan Velasquez tubo conducta de capitan para que con aquella Gente que él le dió ó toviere en aquella tierra como capitan particular le acudiese á él ó á quien le mandase. Juan Velasquez faltó á lo que era obligado en no pasar á Pánfilo de Narvaez siendo requerido de Diego Velasquez, mas si le hizo capitan Hernando Cortés, é le dió él la Gente, á él havia de acudir, como acudió, excepto si viera carta, á mandamiento expreso del Rey en contrario." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

chose rather to attach himself to his desperate fortunes than to those of the governor of Cuba, powerful as the latter was, and his near kinsman. It was the same address which gained Cortés such an ascendancy over his soldiers and knit them to him so closely that in the darkest moment not a man offered to desert him.²² If the success of the assault may be ascribed mainly to the dark and stormy weather which covered it, it was owing to him that he was in a condition to avail himself of this. The shortest possible time intervened between the conception of his plan and its execution. In a very few days he descended by extraordinary marches from the capital to the sea-coast. He came like a torrent from the mountains, pouring on the enemy's camp, and sweeping everything away, before a barrier could be raised to arrest it. This celerity of movement, the result of a clear head and determined will, has entered into the strategy of the greatest captains, and forms a prominent feature in their most brilliant military exploits. It was undoubtedly in the present instance a great cause of success.

But it would be taking a limited view of the subject to consider the battle which decided the fate of Narvaez as wholly fought at Cempoalla. It was begun in Mexico. With that singular power

²² This ascendancy the thoughtful Oviedo refers to his dazzling and liberal manners, so strongly contrasted with those of the governor of Cuba. "En lo demas valerosa persona ha seido, é para mucho; y este deseo de mandar juntamente con que fué mui bien partido é gratificador de los que le viniéron, fué mucha causa juntamente con ser mal quisto Diego Velasquez, para que Cortés se saliese con lo que emprendió, é se quedase en el oficio, é governacion." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

which he exercised over all who came near him, Cortés converted the very emissaries of Narvaez into his own friends and agents. The reports of Guevara and his companions, the intrigues of Father Olmedo, and the general's gold, were all busily at work to shake the loyalty of the soldiers, and the battle was half won before a blow had been struck. It was fought quite as much with gold as with steel. Cortés understood this so well that he made it his great object to seize the person of Narvaez. In such an event, he had full confidence that indifference to their own cause and partiality to himself would speedily bring the rest of the army under his banner. He was not deceived. Narvaez said truly enough, therefore, some years after this event, that "he had been beaten by his own troops, not by those of his rival; that his followers had been bribed to betray him."²³ This affords the only explanation of their brief and ineffectual resistance.

²³ It was in a conversation with Oviedo himself, at Toledo, in 1525, in which Narvaez descanted with much bitterness, as was natural, on his rival's conduct. The gossip, which has never appeared in print, may have some interest for the Spanish reader. "Que el año de 1525, estando Cesar en la cibdad de Toledo, ví allí al dicho Narvaez, é publicamente decia, que Cortés era vn traidor: E que dándole S. M. licencia se lo haria conocer de su persona á la suya, é que era hombre sin verdad, é otras muchas é feas palabras llamándole alevoso é tirano, é ingrato á su Señor, é á quien le havia embiado á la Nueva España, que era el Adelantado Diego Velasquez á su propia costa, é se le havia alzado con la tierra, é con la Gente é Hacienda, é otras muchas cosas que mal sonaban. Y en la manera de su prision la contaba mui al reves de lo que está dicho. Lo que yo noto de esto es, que con todo lo que oí á Narvaez, (como yo se lo dixé) no puedo hallarle desculpa para su descuido, porque ninguna necesidad tenia de andar con Cortés en pláticas, sino estar en vela mejor que la que hizo. E á esto decia él que le havian vendido aquellos de quien se fiaba, que Cortés le havia sobornado." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 12.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCONTENT OF THE TROOPS—INSURRECTION IN
THE CAPITAL—RETURN OF CORTÉS—GENERAL
SIGNS OF HOSTILITY—MASSACRE BY ALVARADO—
RISING OF THE AZTECS

1520

THE tempest, that had raged so wildly during the night, passed away with the morning, which rose bright and unclouded on the field of battle. As the light advanced, it revealed more strikingly the disparity of the two forces so lately opposed to each other. Those of Narvaez could not conceal their chagrin; and murmurs of displeasure became audible, as they contrasted their own superior numbers and perfect appointments with the way-worn visages and rude attire of their handful of enemies! It was with some satisfaction, therefore, that the general beheld his dusky allies from Chinantla, two thousand in number, arrive upon the field. They were a fine, athletic set of men; and, as they advanced in a sort of promiscuous order, so to speak, with their gay banners of feather-work, and their long lances tipped with *itzli* and copper glistening in the morning sun, they had something of an air of military discipline.

They came too late for the action, indeed, but Cortés was not sorry to exhibit to his new followers the extent of his resources in the country. As he had now no occasion for his Indian allies, after a courteous reception and a liberal recompense he dismissed them to their homes.¹

He then used his utmost endeavors to allay the discontent of the troops. He addressed them in his most soft and insinuating tones, and was by no means frugal of his promises.² He suited the action to the word. There were few of them but had lost their accoutrements or their baggage, or horses taken and appropriated by the victors. This last article was in great request among the latter, and many a soldier, weary with the long marches hitherto made on foot, had provided himself, as he imagined, with a much more comfortable as well as creditable conveyance for the rest of the campaign. The general now commanded everything to be restored.³ "They were embarked in the same cause," he said, "and should share with one another equally." He went still further, and distributed among the soldiers of Narvaez a quantity of gold and other precious commodities gathered

¹ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 6.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 123.

² Diaz, who had often listened to it, thus notices his eloquence: "Comenzó vn parlamento por tan lindo estilo, y plática, tãbiẽ dichas cierto otras palabras mas sabrosas, y llenas de ofertas, q̃ yo aquí no sabré escriuir." Ibid., cap. 122.

³ Captain Diaz had secured for his share of the spoil of the Philistines, as he tells us, a very good horse with all his accoutrements, a brace of swords, three daggers, and a buckler,—a very beautiful outfit for the campaign. The general's orders were, naturally enough, not at all to his taste. Ibid., cap. 124.

from the neighboring tribes or found in his rival's quarters.⁴

These proceedings, however politic in reference to his new followers, gave great disgust to his old. "Our commander," they cried, "has forsaken his friends for his foes. We stood by him in his hour of distress, and are rewarded with blows and wounds, while the spoil goes to our enemies!" The indignant soldiery commissioned the priest Olmedo and Alonso de Avila to lay their complaints before Cortés. The ambassadors stated them without reserve, comparing their commander's conduct to the ungrateful proceeding of Alexander, who, when he gained a victory, usually gave away more to his enemies than to the troops who enabled him to beat them. Cortés was greatly perplexed. Victorious or defeated, his path seemed equally beset with difficulties.

He endeavored to soothe their irritation by pleading the necessity of the case. "Our new comrades," he said, "are formidable from their numbers, so much so that we are even now much more in their power than they are in ours. Our only security is to make them not merely confederates, but friends. On any cause of disgust, we shall have the whole battle to fight over again, and, if they are united, under a much greater disadvantage than before. I have considered your interests," he added, "as much as my own. All that I

⁴ Narvaez alleges that Cortés plundered him of property to the value of 100,000 castellanos of gold! (*Demanda de Zavallos en nombre de Narvaez*, MS.) If so, the pillage of the leader may have supplied the means of liberality to the private.

have is yours. But why should there be any ground for discontent, when the whole country, with its riches, is before us? And our augmented strength must henceforth secure the undisturbed control of it."

But Cortés did not rely wholly on argument for the restoration of tranquillity. He knew this to be incompatible with inaction, and he made arrangements to divide his forces at once and to employ them on distant services. He selected a detachment of two hundred men, under Diego de Ordaz, whom he ordered to form the settlement before meditated on the Coatzacoalco. A like number was sent with Velasquez de Leon, to secure the province of Panuco, some three degrees to the north, on the Mexican Gulf. Twenty in each detachment were drafted from his own veterans.

Two hundred men he despatched to Vera Cruz, with orders to have the rigging, iron, and everything portable on board of the fleet of Narvaez, brought on shore, and the vessels completely dismantled. He appointed a person named Cavallero superintendent of the marine, with instructions that if any ships hereafter should enter the port they should be dismantled in like manner, and their officers imprisoned on shore.⁵

⁵ Demanda de Zavallós en nombre de Narvaez, MS.—Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 124.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 130.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—The visit of Narvaez left melancholy traces among the natives, that made it long remembered. A negro in his suite brought with him the smallpox. The disease spread rapidly in that quarter of the country, and great numbers of the Indian population soon fell victims to it. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 6.

But, while he was thus occupied with new schemes of discovery and conquest, he received such astounding intelligence from Mexico as compelled him to concentrate all his faculties and his forces on that one point. The city was in a state of insurrection. No sooner had the struggle with his rival been decided, than Cortés despatched a courier with the tidings to the capital. In less than a fortnight the messenger returned with a letter from Alvarado, conveying the alarming information that the Mexicans were in arms and had vigorously assaulted the Spaniards in their own quarters. The enemy, he added, had burned the brigantines, by which Cortés had secured the means of retreat in case of the destruction of the bridges. They had attempted to force the defences, and had succeeded in partially undermining them, and they had overwhelmed the garrison with a tempest of missiles, which had killed several and wounded a great number. The letter concluded with beseeching the commander to hasten to the relief of his men, if he would save them or keep his hold on the capital.

These tidings were a heavy blow to the general, —the heavier, it seemed, coming as they did in the hour of triumph, when he had thought to have all his enemies at his feet. There was no room for hesitation. To lose his footing in the capital, the noblest city in the Western World, would be to lose the country itself, which looked up to it as its head.⁶ He opened the matter fully to his soldiers,

⁶ “Se perdía la mejor, y mas Noble Ciudad de todo lo nuevamente descubierto del Mundo; y ella perdida, se perdía todo lo que estaba

calling on all who would save their countrymen to follow him. All declared their readiness to go; showing an alacrity, says Diaz, which some would have been slow to manifest had they foreseen the future.

Cortés now made preparations for instant departure. He countermanded the orders previously given to Velasquez and Ordaz, and directed them to join him with their forces at Tlascala. He called the troops from Vera Cruz, leaving only a hundred men in garrison there, under command of one Rodrigo Rangre; for he could not spare the services of Sandoval at this crisis. He left his sick and wounded at Cempoalla, under charge of a small detachment, directing that they should follow as soon as they were in marching order. Having completed these arrangements, he set out from Cempoalla, well supplied with provisions by its hospitable cacique, who attended him some leagues on his way. The Totonac chief seems to have had an amiable facility of accommodating himself to the powers that were in the ascendant.

Nothing worthy of notice occurred during the first part of the march. The troops everywhere met with a friendly reception from the peasantry, who readily supplied their wants. For some time before reaching Tlascala, the route lay through a country thinly settled; and the army experienced considerable suffering from want of food, and still more from that of water. Their distress increased to an alarming degree, as, in the hurry of

ganado, por ser la Cabeza de todo, y á quien todos obedecian." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 131.

their forced march, they travelled with the meridian sun beating fiercely on their heads. Several faltered by the way, and, throwing themselves down by the roadside, seemed incapable of further effort, and almost indifferent to life.

In this extremity, Cortés sent forward a small detachment of horse to procure provisions in Tlascala, and speedily followed in person. On arriving, he found abundant supplies already prepared by the hospitable natives. They were sent back to the troops; the strugglers were collected one by one; refreshments were administered; and the army, restored in strength and spirits, entered the republican capital.

Here they gathered little additional news respecting the events in Mexico, which a popular rumor attributed to the secret encouragement and machinations of Montezuma. Cortés was commodiously lodged in the quarters of Maxixca, one of the four chiefs of the republic. They readily furnished him with two thousand troops. There was no want of heartiness, when the war was with their ancient enemy the Aztec.⁷

The Spanish commander, on reviewing his forces after the junction with his two captains, found that they amounted to about a thousand foot, and one hundred horse, besides the Tlascalan levies.⁸ In the infantry were nearly a hundred

⁷ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 131.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 14.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 124, 125.—Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 5.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

⁸ Gomara, Crónica, cap. 103.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 7.—Bernal Diaz raises the amount to 1300 foot and 96 horse.

arquebusiers, with as many crossbowmen; and the part of the army brought over by Narvaez was admirably equipped. It was inferior, however, to his own veterans in what is better than any outward appointments,—military training, and familiarity with the peculiar service in which they were engaged.

Leaving these friendly quarters, the Spaniards took a more northerly route, as more direct than that by which they had before penetrated into the Valley. It was the road to Tezcuco. It still compelled them to climb the same bold range of the Cordilleras, which attains its greatest elevation in the two mighty *volcans* at whose base they had before travelled. The sides of the sierra were clothed with dark forests of pine, cypress, and cedar,⁹ through which glimpses now and then opened into fathomless dells and valleys, whose depths, far down in the sultry climate of the tropics, were lost in a glowing wilderness of vegetation. From the crest of the mountain range the eye travelled over the broad expanse of country, which they had lately crossed, far away to the green plains of Cholula. Towards the west they looked

(Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 125.) Cortés diminishes it to less than half that number. (Rel. Seg., ubi supra.) The estimate cited in the text from the two preceding authorities corresponds nearly enough with that already given from official documents of the forces of Cortés and Narvaez before the junction.

⁹ “Las sierras altas de Tetzcucó á que le mostrasen desde la mas alta cumbre de aquellas montañas y sierras de Tetzcucó, que son las sierras de Tlallocan altísimas y humbrosas, en las cuales he estado y visto, y puedo decir que son bastante para descubrir el un emisferio y otro, porque son los mayores puertos y mas altos de esta Nueva España, de árboles y montes de grandísima altura, de cedras, cipreses y pinares.” Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

down on the Mexican Valley, from a point of view wholly different from that which they had before occupied, but still offering the same beautiful spectacle, with its lakes trembling in the light, its gay cities and villas floating on their bosom, its burnished *teocallis* touched with fire, its cultivated slopes and dark hills of porphyry stretching away in dim perspective to the verge of the horizon. At their feet lay the city of Tezcuco, which, modestly retiring behind her deep groves of cypress, formed a contrast to her more ambitious rival on the other side of the lake, who seemed to glory in the unveiled splendors of her charms, as Mistress of the Valley.

As they descended into the populous plains, their reception by the natives was very different from that which they had experienced on the preceding visit. There were no groups of curious peasantry to be seen gazing at them as they passed, and offering their simple hospitality. The supplies they asked were not refused, but granted with an ungracious air, that showed the blessing of the giver did not accompany them. This air of reserve became still more marked as the army entered the suburbs of the ancient capital of the Acolhuans. No one came forth to greet them, and the population seemed to have dwindled away,—so many of them were withdrawn to the neighboring scene of hostilities at Mexico.¹⁰ Their cold recep-

¹⁰ The historian partly explains the reason: "En la misma Ciudad de Tezcuco habia algunos apasionados de los deudos y amigos de los que mataron Pedro de Alvarado y sus compañeros en México." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

tion was a sensible mortification to the veterans of Cortés, who, judging from the past, had boasted to their new comrades of the sensation their presence would excite among the natives. The cacique of the place, who, as it may be remembered, had been created through the influence of Cortés, was himself absent. The general drew an ill omen from all these circumstances, which even raised an uncomfortable apprehension in his mind respecting the fate of the garrison in Mexico.¹¹

But his doubts were soon dispelled by the arrival of a messenger in a canoe from that city, whence he had escaped through the remissness of the enemy, or, perhaps, with their connivance. He brought despatches from Alvarado, informing his commander that the Mexicans had for the last fortnight desisted from active hostilities and converted their operations into a blockade. The garrison had suffered greatly, but Alvarado expressed his conviction that the siege would be raised, and tranquillity restored, on the approach of his countrymen. Montezuma sent a messenger, also, to the same effect. At the same time, he exculpated himself from any part in the late hostilities, which he said had been conducted not only without his privity, but contrary to his inclination and efforts.

The Spanish general, having halted long enough to refresh his wearied troops, took up his

¹¹ "En todo el camino nunca me salió á recibir ninguna Persona de el dicho Mutezuma, como ántes lo solian facer; y toda la Tierra estaba alborotada, y casi despoblada: de que concebí mala sospecha, creyendo que los Españoles que en la dicha Ciudad habian quedado, eran muertos." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 132.

march along the southern margin of the lake, which led him over the same causeway by which he had before entered the capital. It was the day consecrated to St. John the Baptist, the 24th of June, 1520. But how different was the scene from that presented on his former entrance!¹² No crowds now lined the roads, no boats swarmed on the lake, filled with admiring spectators. A single pirogue might now and then be seen in the distance, like a spy stealthily watching their movements, and darting away the moment it had attracted notice. A deathlike stillness brooded over the scene,—a stillness that spoke louder to the heart than the acclamations of multitudes.

Cortés rode on moodily at the head of his battalions, finding abundant food for meditation, doubtless, in this change of circumstances. As if to dispel these gloomy reflections, he ordered his trumpets to sound, and their clear, shrill notes, borne across the waters, told the inhabitants of the beleaguered fortress that their friends were at hand. They were answered by a joyous peal of artillery, which seemed to give a momentary exhilaration to the troops, as they quickened their pace, traversed the great drawbridges, and once more found themselves within the walls of the imperial city.

The appearance of things here was not such as to allay their apprehensions. In some places they

¹² "Y como asomó á la vista de la Ciudad de México, parecióle que estaba toda yerma, y que no parecía persona por todos los caminos, ni casas, ni plazas, ni nadie le salió á recibir, ni de los suyos, ni de los enemigos; y fué esto señal de indignacion y enemistad por lo que habia pasado." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 19.

beheld the smaller bridges removed, intimating too plainly, now that their brigantines were destroyed, how easy it would be to cut off their retreat.¹³ The town seemed even more deserted than Tezcucó. Its once busy and crowded population had mysteriously vanished. And, as the Spaniards defiled through the empty streets, the tramp of their horses' feet upon the pavement was answered by dull and melancholy echoes that fell heavily on their hearts. With saddened feelings they reached the great gates of the palace of Axayacatl. The gates were thrown open, and Cortés and his veterans, rushing in, were cordially embraced by their companions in arms, while both parties soon forgot the present in the interesting recapitulation of the past.¹⁴

The first inquiries of the general were respecting the origin of the tumult. The accounts were various. Some imputed it to the desire of the Mexicans to release their sovereign from confinement; others to the design of cutting off the garrison while crippled by the absence of Cortés and their countrymen. All agreed, however, in tracing the immediate cause to the violence of Alvarado. It was common for the Aztecs to celebrate

¹³ "Pontes ligneos qui tractim lapideos intersecant, sublatos, ac vias aggeribus munitas reperit." P. Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 5.

¹⁴ Probanza á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde, MS.—*Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 133.—"Esto causó gran admiracion en todos los que venian, pero no dejaron de marchar, hasta entrar donde estaban los Españoles acorralados. Venian todos muy cansados y muy fatigados y con mucho deseo de llegar á donde estaban sus hermanos; los de dentro quando los vieron, recibieron singular consolacion y esfuerzo y recibieronlos con la artillería que tenian, saludándolos, y dándolos el parabien de su venida." Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.

an annual festival in May, in honor of their patron war-god. It was called the "incensing of Huitzilopochtli," and was commemorated by sacrifice, religious songs, and dances, in which most of the nobles engaged, for it was one of the great festivals which displayed the pomp of the Aztec ritual. As it was held in the court of the *teocalli*, in the immediate neighborhood of the Spanish quarters, and as a part of the temple itself was reserved for a Christian chapel, the caciques asked permission of Alvarado to perform their rites there. They requested also, it is said, to be allowed the presence of Montezuma. This latter petition Alvarado declined, in obedience to the injunctions of Cortés; but acquiesced in the former, on condition that the Aztecs should celebrate no human sacrifices and should come without weapons.

They assembled accordingly on the day appointed, to the number of six hundred, at the smallest computation.¹⁵ They were dressed in their most magnificent gala costumes, with their graceful mantles of feather-work sprinkled with precious stones, and their necks, arms, and legs ornamented with collars and bracelets of gold. They had that love of gaudy splendor which belongs to semi-civilized nations, and on these occa-

¹⁵ "E así los Indios, todos Señores, mas de 600 desnudos é con muchas joyas de oro é hermosos penachos, é muchas piedras preciosas, é como mas aderezados é gentiles hombres se pudieron é supieron aderezar, é sin arma alguna defensiva ni ofensiva bailaban é cantaban é hacian su areito é fiesta segun su costumbre." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 54.) Some writers carry the number as high as eight hundred or even one thousand. Las Casas, with a more modest exaggeration than usual, swells it only to two thousand. Brevissima Relatione, p. 48.

sions displayed all the pomp and profusion of their barbaric wardrobes.

Alvarado and his soldiers attended as spectators, some of them taking their station at the gates as if by chance, and others mingling in the crowd. They were all armed,—a circumstance which, as it was usual, excited no attention. The Aztecs were soon engrossed by the exciting movement of the dance, accompanied by their religious chant and wild, discordant minstrelsy. While thus occupied, Alvarado and his men, at a concerted signal, rushed with drawn swords on their victims. Unprotected by armor or weapons of any kind, they were hewn down without resistance by their assailants, who in their bloody work, says a contemporary, showed no touch of pity or compunction.¹⁶ Some fled to the gates, but were caught on the long pikes of the soldiers. Others, who attempted to scale the *coatepantli*, or Wall of Serpents, as it was called, which surrounded the area, shared the like fate, or were cut to pieces, or shot by the ruthless soldiery. The pavement, says a writer of the age, ran with streams of blood, like water in a heavy shower.¹⁷ Not an Aztec, of all that gay company, was left alive! It was repeating the dreadful scene of Cholula, with the disgraceful addition that the Spaniards, not content with slaughtering their victims, rifled them of the precious ornaments on their persons! On this sad

¹⁶ "Sin duelo ni piedad Christiana los acuchilló, i mató." Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 104.

¹⁷ "Fué tan grande el derramamiento de Sangre, que corrian arroyos de ella por el Patio, como agua quando mucho llueve." Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 20.

day fell the flower of the Aztec nobility. Not a family of note but had mourning and desolation brought within its walls.¹⁸ And many a doleful ballad, rehearsing the tragic incidents of the story, and adapted to the plaintive national airs, continued to be chanted by the natives long after the subjugation of the country.¹⁹

Various explanations have been given of this atrocious deed. But few historians have been content to admit that of Alvarado himself. According to this, intelligence had been obtained through

¹⁸ [In the process instituted against Alvarado this massacre forms one of the most important charges. He is there accused of having killed four hundred of the principal nobles and a great number of the common people, of whom more than three thousand, it is stated, were assembled to celebrate the festival in honor of their war-god. "Ynbio al patyo donde todos baylaban y syn cabsa ni razon alguna dieron sobrellos y mataron todos los mas de los señores que estavan presos con el dicho Motenzuma y mataron quatro cientos señores e prencipales que con el estavan e mataron mucho numero de yndios que estavan baylando en mas cantydad de tres mill personas." (Procesos de Residencia, instruidos contra Pedro de Alvarado y Nuño de Guzman, p. 53.) The public are under great obligations to the licentiate Don Ignacio Rayon for bringing into light this important document, which for more than three centuries had lain hid in the General Archives of Mexico. We have hardly less reason to thank him for placing the manuscript in the hands of so competent a scholar as Don José Fernando Ramirez, to enrich it with the stores of his critical erudition. The publication of the process did not take place till some years after that of my own history of the Conquest of Mexico. But, as it contains a minute specification of the various charges against Alvarado, and his own defence, it furnishes me with the means of correcting any errors into which I have fallen in reference to that commander, while it corroborates, I may add, the general tenor of the statements I have derived from contemporary chroniclers.]

¹⁹ "Y de aquí á que se acabe el mundo, ó ellos del todo se acaben, no dexarán de lamentar, y cantar en sus areytos, y bayles, como en romances, que acá dezimos, aquella calamidad, y perdida de la sucession de toda su nobleza, de que se preciauan de tantos años atras." Las Casas, Brevíssima Relatione, p. 49.

his spies—some of them Mexicans—of an intended rising of the Indians. The celebration of this festival was fixed on as the period for its execution, when the caciques would be met together and would easily rouse the people to support them. Alvarado, advised of all this, had forbidden them to wear arms at their meeting. While affecting to comply, they had secreted their weapons in the neighboring arsenals, whence they could readily withdraw them. But his own blow, by anticipating theirs, defeated the design, and, as he confidently hoped, would deter the Aztecs from a similar attempt in future.²⁰

Such is the account of the matter given by Alvarado. But, if true, why did he not verify his assertion by exposing the arms thus secreted? Why did he not vindicate his conduct in the eyes of the Mexicans generally, by publicly avowing the treason of the nobles, as was done by Cortés at Cholula? The whole looks much like an apology devised after the commission of the deed, to cover up its atrocity.

Some contemporaries assign a very different motive for the massacre, which, according to them, originated in the cupidity of the Conquerors, as shown by their plundering the bodies of their victims.²¹ Bernal Diaz, who, though not present, had

²⁰ See Alvarado's reply to queries of Cortés, as reported by Diaz (*Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 125), with some additional particulars in Torquemada (*Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 66), Solís (*Conquista*, lib. 4, cap. 12), and Herrera (*Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8) who all seem content to endorse Alvarado's version of the matter. I find no other authority, of any weight, in the same charitable vein.

²¹ Oviedo mentions a conversation which he had some years after this tragedy with a noble Spaniard, Don Thoan Cano, who came over

conversed familiarly with those who were, vindicates them from the charge of this unworthy motive. According to him, Alvarado struck the blow in order to intimidate the Aztecs from any insurrectionary movement.²² But whether he had reason to apprehend such, or even affected to do so before the massacre, the old chronicler does not inform us.

On reflection, it seems scarcely possible that so foul a deed, and one involving so much hazard to the Spaniards themselves, should have been perpetrated from the mere desire of getting possession of the baubles worn on the persons of the natives. It is more likely this was an afterthought, suggested to the rapacious soldiery by the display of the spoil before them. It is not improbable that Alvarado may have gathered rumors of a conspiracy among the nobles,—rumors, perhaps, derived through the Tlascalans, their inveterate foes, and for that reason very little deserving of credit.²³ He proposed to defeat it by

in the train of Narvaez and was present at all the subsequent operations of the army. He married a daughter of Montezuma, and settled in Mexico after the Conquest. Oviedo describes him as a man of sense and integrity. In answer to the historian's queries respecting the cause of the rising, he said that Alvarado had wantonly perpetrated the massacre from pure avarice; and the Aztecs, enraged at such unprovoked and unmerited cruelty, rose, as they well might, to avenge it. (*Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 54.) See the original dialogue in Appendix, No. 11.

²² "Verdaderamente dió en ellos por metelles temor." *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 125.

²³ Such, indeed, is the statement of Ixtlilxochitl, derived, as he says, from the native Tezcucan annalists. According to them, the Tlascalans, urged by their hatred of the Aztecs and their thirst for plunder, persuaded Alvarado, nothing loth, that the nobles meditated a rising on the occasion of these festivities. The testimony is impor-

imitating the example of his commander at Cholula. But he omitted to imitate his leader in taking precautions against the subsequent rising of the populace. And he grievously miscalculated when he confounded the bold and warlike Aztec with the effeminate Cholulan.²⁴

No sooner was the butchery accomplished, than the tidings spread like wildfire through the capital.

tant, and I give it in the author's words: "Fué que ciertos Tlascaltecas (segun las Historias de Tescuco que son las que lo sigo y la carta que otras veces he referido) por embidia lo uno acordándose que en semejante fiesta los Mexicanos solian sacrificar gran suma de cautivos de los de la Nacion Tlascalteca, y lo otro que era la mejor ocasion que ellos podian tener para poder hinchir las manos de despojos y hartar su codicia, y vengarse de sus Enemigos (porque hasta entonces no habian tenido lugar, ni Cortés se les diera, ni admitiera sus dichos, porque siempre hacia las cosas con mucho acuerdo) fuéron con esta invencion al capitan Pedro de Albarado, que estaba en lugar de Cortés, el qual no fué menester mucho para darles crédito porque tan buenos filos, y pensamientos tenia como ellos, y mas viendo que allí en aquella fiesta habian acudido todos los Señores y Cabezas del Imperio y que muertos no tenian mucho trabajo en sojuzgarles." Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

²⁴ [Alvarado intimates, in the defence of his conduct which forms part of the process, one source of the rumors respecting the rising of the Aztecs, by saying that the existence of such a scheme was matter of public notoriety among the Tlascalans. He adds that he obtained more precise intelligence from two or three Indians, one a Tezcucan, another a slave whom he had rescued from the sacrifice to which he had been doomed by the Aztecs; that these latter, under cover of the festivities, had planned an insurrection against the Spaniards, in which he and his countrymen were all to be exterminated. At the same time they determined to tear down the image of the Virgin which had been raised in the temple, and in its place to substitute that of their war-god, Huitzilopochtli. Montezuma was accused of being privy to this conspiracy. Thus instructed, Alvarado, as he asserts, got his men in readiness to resist the enemy, who, after a short encounter, was repulsed with slaughter, while one Spaniard was slain, and he himself, with several others, severely wounded (Proceso, pp. 66, 67). But although a long array of witnesses, most of them probably his ancient friends and comrades, are introduced to endorse his statement, one who reflects on the submissive spirit hitherto shown, not only by Montezuma, but his subjects, in their

Men could scarcely credit their senses. All they had hitherto suffered, the desecration of their temples, the imprisonment of their sovereign, the insults heaped on his person, all were forgotten in this one act.²⁵ Every feeling of long-smothered hostility and rancor now burst forth in the cry for vengeance. Every former sentiment of superstitious dread was merged in that of inextinguishable hatred. It required no effort of the priests—though this was not wanting—to fan these passions into a blaze. The city rose in arms to a man; and on the following dawn, almost before the Spaniards could secure themselves in their defences, they were assaulted with desperate fury. Some of the assailants attempted to scale the walls; others succeeded in partially undermining and setting fire to the works. Whether they would have succeeded in carrying the place by storm is doubtful. But, at the prayers of the garrison, Montezuma himself interfered, and, mounting the battlements, addressed the populace, whose fury he endeavored to mitigate by urging considerations for his own safety. They respected their monarch

dealings with the Spaniards, and contrasts it with the fierce and unscrupulous temper displayed by Alvarado, will have little doubt on whose head the guilt of the massacre must rest; and as little seems to have been felt by most of the writers of the time who have spoken of the affair.]

²⁵ Martyr well recapitulates these grievances, showing that they seemed such in the eyes of the Spaniards themselves,—of those, at least, whose judgment was not warped by a share in the transactions. “*Emori statuerunt malle, quam diutius ferre tales hospites qui regem suum sub tutoris vitæ specie detineant, civitatem occupent, antiquos hostes Tascaltecanos et alios præterea in contumeliam ante illorum oculos ipsorum impensa consuerunt; . . . qui demum simulachra deorum confregerint, et ritus veteres ac ceremonias antiquas illis abstulerint.*” *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 5.

so far as to desist from further attempts to storm the fortress, but changed their operations into a regular blockade. They threw up works around the palace to prevent the egress of the Spaniards. They suspended the *tianguetz*, or market, to preclude the possibility of their enemy's obtaining supplies; and they then quietly sat down, with feelings of sullen desperation, waiting for the hour when famine should throw their victims into their hands.

The condition of the besieged, meanwhile, was sufficiently distressing. Their magazines of provisions, it is true, were not exhausted; but they suffered greatly from want of water, which, within the enclosure, was exceedingly brackish, for the soil was saturated with the salt of the surrounding element. In this extremity, they discovered, it is said, a spring of fresh water in the area. Such springs were known in some other parts of the city; but, discovered first under these circumstances, it was accounted as nothing less than a miracle. Still they suffered much from their past encounters. Seven Spaniards, and many Tlascalans, had fallen, and there was scarcely one of either nation who had not received several wounds. In this situation, far from their own countrymen, without expectation of succor from abroad, they seemed to have no alternative before them but a lingering death by famine, or one more dreadful on the altar of sacrifice. From this gloomy state they were relieved by the coming of their comrades.²⁶

²⁶ Camargo, Hist. de Tlascalá, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 47.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 105.

Cortés calmly listened to the explanation made by Alvarado. But, before it was ended, the conviction must have forced itself on his mind that he had made a wrong selection for this important post. Yet the mistake was natural. Alvarado was a cavalier of high family, gallant and chivalrous, and his warm personal friend. He had talents for action, was possessed of firmness and intrepidity, while his frank and dazzling manners made the *Tonatiuh* an especial favorite with the Mexicans. But underneath this showy exterior the future conqueror of Guatemala concealed a heart rash, rapacious, and cruel. He was altogether destitute of that moderation which, in the delicate position he occupied, was a quality of more worth than all the rest.

When Alvarado had concluded his answers to the several interrogatories of Cortés, the brow of the latter darkened, as he said to his lieutenant, "You have done badly. You have been false to your trust. Your conduct has been that of a madman!" And, turning abruptly on his heel, he left him in undisguised displeasure.

Yet this was not a time to break with one so popular, and, in many respects, so important to him, as this captain, much less to inflict on him the punishment he merited. The Spaniards were like mariners laboring in a heavy tempest, whose bark nothing but the dexterity of the pilot and the hearty co-operation of the crew can save from foundering. Dissensions at such a moment must be fatal. Cortés, it is true, felt strong in his present resources. He now found himself at the head

of a force which could scarcely amount to less than twelve hundred and fifty Spaniards, and eight thousand native warriors, principally Tlascalans.²⁷ But, though relying on this to overawe resistance, the very augmentation of numbers increased the difficulty of subsistence. Discontented with himself, disgusted with his officer, and embarrassed by the disastrous consequences in which Alvarado's intemperance had involved him, he became irritable, and indulged in a petulance by no means common; for, though a man of lively passions by nature, he held them habitually under control.²⁸

On the day that Cortés arrived, Montezuma had left his own quarters to welcome him. But the Spanish commander, distrusting, as it would seem, however unreasonably, his good faith, received him so coldly that the Indian monarch withdrew, displeased and dejected, to his apartment. As the Mexican populace made no show of submission, and brought no supplies to the army, the general's ill humor with the emperor continued. When, therefore, Montezuma sent some of the nobles to ask an interview with Cortés, the latter, turning to his own officers, haughtily exclaimed, "What have

²⁷ He left in garrison, on his departure from Mexico, 140 Spaniards and about 6500 Tlascalans, including a few Cempoallan warriors. Supposing five hundred of these—a liberal allowance—to have perished in battle and otherwise, it would still leave a number which, with the reinforcement now brought, would raise the amount to that stated in the text.

²⁸ "Seeing how all went contrary to his expectations and that we still received no supplies, he grew extremely sad, and showed himself in his bearing towards the Spaniards fretful and haughty." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 126.

I to do with this dog of a king who suffers us to starve before his eyes?"

His captains, among whom were Olid, De Avila, and Velasquez de Leon, endeavored to mitigate his anger, reminding him, in respectful terms, that had it not been for the emperor the garrison might even now have been overwhelmed by the enemy. This remonstrance only chafed him the more. "Did not the dog," he asked, repeating the opprobrious epithet, "betray us in his communications with Narvaez? And does he not now suffer his markets to be closed, and leave us to die of famine?" Then, turning fiercely to the Mexicans, he said, "Go tell your master and his people to open the markets, or we will do it for them, at their cost!" The chiefs, who had gathered the import of his previous taunt on their sovereign, from his tone and gesture, or perhaps from some comprehension of his language, left his presence swelling with resentment, and, in communicating his message, took care it should lose none of its effect.²⁹

Shortly after, Cortés, at the suggestion, it is said, of Montezuma, released his brother Cuitlahua, lord of Iztapalapan, who, it will be remembered, had been seized on suspicion of co-operating with the chief of Tezcuco in his meditated revolt.*

²⁹ The scene is reported by Diaz, who was present. (*Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 126.) See, also, the *Chronicle of Gomara*, the chaplain of Cortés. (Cap. 106.) It is further confirmed by Don Thoan Cano, an eye-witness, in his conversation with Oviedo. See Appendix, No. 11.

* [This was the enormous blunder committed by Cortés, because of his ignorance of Aztec tribal customs, which was mentioned in the

It was thought he might be of service in allaying the present tumult and bringing the populace to a better state of feeling. But he returned no more to the fortress.³⁰ He was a bold, ambitious prince, and the injuries he had received from the Spaniards rankled deep in his bosom. He was presumptive heir to the crown, which, by the Aztec laws of succession, descended much more frequently in a collateral than in a direct line. The people welcomed him as the representative of their sovereign, and chose him to supply the place of Montezuma during his captivity. Cuitlahua willingly accepted the post of honor and of danger. He was an experienced warrior, and exerted himself to reorganize the disorderly levies and to arrange a more efficient plan of operations. The effect was soon visible.

Cortés meanwhile had so little doubt of his abil-

³⁰ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 8.

note on p. 346, vol. ii. In releasing Cuitlahua from captivity Cortés put away the last guaranty of safety his forces possessed. Cuitlahua was next in the line of succession of the eligibles from whom the priest commander was chosen. The Tlatocan, or tribal council, was the power which controlled all the affairs of the tribe. This council, which elected a ruler, could also in extraordinary circumstances depose him and set another man in his place. As soon as he was released Cuitlahua convened the Tlatocan. That body at once deposed Montezuma and made Cuitlahua priest commander. It was not a captive *sovereign* the Spaniards guarded, but only a deposed *priest commander* whose person was no longer sacred. When, a little later, Montezuma was put forward to address the mob that raged about the walls of the tecpan, another man wore the golden beak of the war-god. It was not against their hereditary ruler, but only against the discredited agent who had once directed the affairs of the tribe that the Aztec warriors hurled their missiles. Montezuma deposed was no more to them than was any member of the tribal council. The spell that had protected the invaders was broken when his office was taken from him.—M.]

ity to overawe the insurgents, that he wrote to that effect to the garrison of Villa Rica by the same despatches in which he informed them of his safe arrival in the capital. But scarcely had his messenger been gone half an hour, when he returned breathless with terror and covered with wounds. "The city," he said, "was all in arms! The drawbridges were raised, and the enemy would soon be upon them!" He spoke truth. It was not long before a hoarse, sullen sound became audible, like that of the roaring of distant waters. It grew louder and louder; till, from the parapet surrounding the enclosure, the great avenues which led to it might be seen dark with the masses of warriors, who came rolling on in a confused tide towards the fortress. At the same time, the terraces and *azoteas* or flat roofs, in the neighborhood, were thronged with combatants brandishing their missiles, who seemed to have risen up as if by magic!³¹ It was a spectacle to appall the stoutest. But the dark storm to which it was the prelude, and which gathered deeper and deeper round the Spaniards during the remainder of their residence in the capital, must form the subject of a separate Book.

³¹ "El qual Mensajero bolvió dende á media hora todo descabrado, y herido, dando voces, que todos los Indios de la Ciudad venian de Guerra y que tenian todas las Puertes alzadas; é junto tras él da sobre nosotros tanta multitud de Gente por todas partes que ni las calles ni Azoteas se parecian con Gente; la qual venia con los mayores alaridos, y grita mas espantable, que en el Mundo se puede pensar." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 134.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdés was born in 1478. He belonged to an ancient family of the Asturias. Every family, indeed, claims to be ancient in this last retreat of the intrepid Goths. He was early introduced at court, and was appointed page to Prince

Juan, the only son of Ferdinand and Isabella, on whom their hopes, and those of the nation, deservedly rested. Oviedo accompanied the camp in the latter campaigns of the Moorish war, and was present at the memorable siege of Granada. On the untimely death of his royal master, in 1496, he passed over to Italy and entered the service of King Frederick of Naples. At the death of that prince he returned to his own country, and in the beginning of the sixteenth century we find him again established in Castile, where he occupied the place of keeper of the crown jewels. In 1513 he was named by Ferdinand the Catholic *veedor*, or inspector, of the gold founderies in the American colonies. Oviedo, accordingly, transported himself to the New World, where he soon took a commission under Pedrarias, governor of Darien, and shared in the disastrous fortunes of that colony. He obtained some valuable privileges from the crown, built a fortress on Tierra Firme and entered into traffic with the natives. In this we may presume he was prosperous, since we find him at length established with a wife and family at Hispaniola, or Fernandina, as it was then called. Although he continued to make his principal residence in the New World, he made occasional visits to Spain, and in 1526 published at Madrid his *Sumario*. It is dedicated to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and contains an account of the West Indies, their geography, climate, the races who inhabited them, together with their animals and vegetable productions. The subject was of great interest to the inquisitive minds of Europe, and one of which they had previously gleaned but scanty information. In 1535, in a subsequent visit to Spain, Oviedo gave to the world the first volume of his great work, which he had been many years in compiling,—the *Historia de las Indias occidentales*. In the same year he was appointed by Charles the Fifth alcaide of the fortress of Hispaniola. He continued in the island the ten following years, actively engaged in the prosecution of his historical researches, and then returned for the last time to his native land. The veteran scholar was well received at court, and obtained the honorable appointment of Chronicler of the Indies. He occupied this post until the period of his death, which took place at Valladolid in 1557, in the seventy-ninth year of his age, at the very time when he was employed in preparing the residue of his history for the press.

Considering the intimate footing on which Oviedo lived with the eminent persons of his time, it is singular that so little is preserved of his personal history and his character. Nic. Antonio speaks of him as a "man of large experience, courteous in his manners, and of great probity." His long and active life is a sufficient voucher for his experience, and one will hardly doubt his good breeding when we know the high society in which he moved. He left a large mass of manuscripts, embracing a vast range both of civil and natural history. By far the most important is his *Historia general de las Indias*. It is divided into three parts, containing fifty books. The first part, con-

sisting of nineteen books, is the one already noticed as having been published during his lifetime. It gives in a more extended form the details of geographical and natural history embodied in his *Sumario*, with a narrative, moreover, of the discoveries and conquests of the Islands. A translation of this portion of the work was made by the learned Ramusio, with whom Oviedo was in correspondence, and is published in the third volume of his inestimable collection. The two remaining parts relate to the conquests of Mexico, of Peru, and other countries of South America. It is that portion of the work consulted for these pages. The manuscript was deposited, at his death, in the *Casa de la Contratacion*, at Seville. It afterwards came into the possession of the Dominican monastery of Monserrat. In process of time, mutilated copies found their way into several private collections; when, in 1775, Don Francisco Cerda y Rico, an officer in the Indian department, ascertained the place in which the original was preserved, and, prompted by his literary zeal, obtained an order from the government for its publication. Under his supervision the work was put in order for the press, and Oviedo's biographer, Alvarez y Baena, assures us that a complete edition of it, prepared with the greatest care, would soon be given to the world. (*Hijos de Madrid* (Madrid, 1790), tom. ii. pp. 354-361.) It still remains in manuscript.*

No country has been more fruitful in the field of historical composition than Spain. Her ballads are chronicles done into verse. The chronicles themselves date from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Every city, every small town, every great family, and many a petty one, has its chronicler. These were often mere monkish chroniclers, who in the seclusion of the convent found leisure for literary occupation. Or, not unfrequently, they were men who had taken part in the affairs they described, more expert with the sword than with the pen. The compositions of this latter class have a general character of that indifference to fine writing which shows a mind intent on the facts with which it is occupied, much more than on forms of expression. The monkish chroniclers, on the other hand, often make a pedantic display of obsolete erudition, which contrasts rather whimsically with the homely texture of the narrative. The chronicles of both the one and the other class of writers may frequently claim the merit of picturesque and animated detail, showing that the subject was one of living interest, and that the writer's heart was in his subject.

Many of the characteristic blemishes of which I have been speaking may be charged on Oviedo. His style is cast in no classic mould. His thoughts find themselves a vent in tedious, interminable sen-

* [*The Historia General y Natural de las Indias, Islas y Tierra-firme del Mar Occano, por El Capitan Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdéz, Primer Cronista del Nuevo Mundo*, was published in four volumes at Madrid, 1851-55, by the Real Academia de la Historia.—M.]

tences, that may fill the reader with despair; and the thread of the narrative is broken by impertinent episodes that lead to nothing. His scholarship was said to be somewhat scanty. One will hardly be led to doubt it, from the tawdry display of Latin quotations with which he garnishes his pages, like a poor gallant who would make the most of his little store of finery. He affected to take the elder Pliny as his model, as appears from the preface to his *Sumario*. But his own work fell far short of the model of erudition and eloquence which that great writer of natural history has bequeathed to us.

Yet, with his obvious defects, Oviedo showed an enlightened curiosity, and a shrewd spirit of observation, which place him far above the ordinary range of chroniclers. He may even be said to display a philosophic tone in his reflections, though his philosophy must be regarded as cold and unscrupulous wherever the rights of the aborigines are in question. He was indefatigable in amassing materials for his narratives, and for this purpose maintained a correspondence with the most eminent men of his time who had taken part in the transactions which he commemorates. He even condescended to collect information from more humble sources, from popular tradition and the reports of the common soldiers. Hence his work often presents a medley of inconsistent and contradictory details, which perplex the judgment, making it exceedingly difficult, at this distance of time, to disentangle the truth. It was perhaps for this reason that Las Casas complimented the author by declaring that "his works were a wholesale fabrication, as full of lies as of pages!" Yet another explanation of this severe judgment may be found in the different characters of the two men. Oviedo shared in the worldly feelings common to the Spanish Conquerors, and, while he was ever ready to magnify the exploits of his countrymen, held lightly the claims and the sufferings of the unfortunate aborigines. He was incapable of appreciating the generous philanthropy of Las Casas, or of rising to his lofty views, which he doubtless derided as those of a benevolent, it might be, but visionary fanatic. Las Casas, on the other hand, whose voice had been constantly uplifted against the abuses of the Conquerors, was filled with abhorrence at the sentiments avowed by Oviedo, and it was natural that his aversion to the principles should be extended to the person who professed them. Probably no two men could have been found less competent to form a right estimate of each other.

Oviedo showed the same activity in gathering materials for natural history as he had done for the illustration of civil. He collected the different plants of the Islands in his garden, and domesticated many of the animals, or kept them in confinement under his eye, where he could study their peculiar habits. By this course, if he did not himself rival Pliny and Hernandez in science, he was, at least, enabled to furnish the man of science with facts of the highest interest and importance.

Besides these historical writings, Oviedo left a work in six volumes,

called by the whimsical title of *Quincuagenas*. It consists of imaginary dialogues between the most eminent Spaniards of the time, in respect to their personal history, their families, and genealogy. It is a work of inestimable value to the historian of the times of Ferdinand and Isabella, and of Charles the Fifth. But it has attracted little attention in Spain, where it still remains in manuscript. A complete copy of Oviedo's History of the Indies is in the archives of the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, and it is understood that this body has now an edition prepared for the press. Such parts as are literally transcribed from preceding narratives, like the Letters of Cortés, which Oviedo transferred without scruple entire and unmutated into his own pages, though enlivened, it is true, by occasional criticism of his own, might as well be omitted. But the remainder of the great work affords a mass of multifarious information which would make an important contribution to the colonial history of Spain.

An authority of frequent reference in these pages is Diego Muñoz Camargo. He was a noble Tlascalcan *mestee*, and lived in the latter half of the sixteenth century. He was educated in the Christian faith, and early instructed in Castilian, in which tongue he composed his *Historia de Tlascala*. In this work he introduces the reader to the different members of the great Nahuatlac family who came successively up the Mexican plateau. Born and bred among the aborigines of the country, when the practices of the pagan age had not wholly become obsolete, Camargo was in a position perfectly to comprehend the condition of the ancient inhabitants; and his work supplies much curious and authentic information respecting the social and religious institutions of the land at the time of the Conquest. His patriotism warms as he recounts the old hostilities of his countrymen with the Aztecs; and it is singular to observe how the detestation of the rival nations survived their common subjection under the Castilian yoke.

Camargo embraces in his narrative an account of this great event, and of the subsequent settlement of the country. As one of the Indian family, we might expect to see his chronicle reflect the prejudices, or, at least, partialities, of the Indian. But the Christian convert yielded up his sympathies as freely to the Conquerors as to his own countrymen. The desire to magnify the exploits of the latter, and at the same time to do full justice to the prowess of the white men, produces occasionally a most whimsical contrast in his pages, giving the story a strong air of inconsistency. In point of literary execution the work has little merit; as great, however, as could be expected from a native Indian, indebted for his knowledge of the tongue to such imperfect instruction as he could obtain from the missionaries. Yet in style of composition it may compare not unfavorably with the writings of some of the missionaries themselves.

The original manuscript was long preserved in the convent of *San*

Felipe Neri in Mexico, where Torquemada, as appears from occasional references, had access to it. It has escaped the attention of other historians, but was embraced by Muñoz in his magnificent collection, and deposited in the archives of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; from which source the copy in my possession was obtained. It bears the title of *Pedazo de Historia verdadera*, and is without the author's name, and without division into books or chapters.

BOOK V

EXPULSION FROM MEXICO

BOOK V

EXPULSION FROM MEXICO

CHAPTER I

DESPERATE ASSAULT ON THE QUARTERS—FURY OF
THE MEXICANS—SALLY OF THE SPANIARDS—
MONTEZUMA ADDRESSES THE PEOPLE—DANGER-
OUSLY WOUNDED

1520

THE palace of Axayacatl, in which the Spaniards were quartered, was, as the reader may remember, a vast, irregular pile of stone buildings, having but one floor, except in the centre, where another story was added, consisting of a suite of apartments which rose like turrets on the main building of the edifice. A vast area stretched around, encompassed by a stone wall of no great height. This was supported by towers or bulwarks at certain intervals, which gave it some degree of strength, not, indeed, as compared with European fortifications, but sufficient to resist the rude battering enginery of the Indians. The parapet had been pierced here and there with embrasures for the artillery, which consisted of thirteen guns; and smaller apertures were made in other parts for the

convenience of the arquebusiers. The Spanish forces found accommodations within the great building; but the numerous body of Tlascalan auxiliaries could have had no other shelter than what was afforded by barracks or sheds hastily constructed for the purpose, in the spacious courtyard. Most of them, probably, bivouacked under the open sky, in a climate milder than that to which they were accustomed among the rude hills of their native land. Thus crowded into a small and compact compass, the whole army could be assembled at a moment's notice; and, as the Spanish commander was careful to enforce the strictest discipline and vigilance, it was scarcely possible that he could be taken by surprise. No sooner, therefore, did the trumpet call to arms, as the approach of the enemy was announced, than every soldier was at his post, the cavalry mounted, the artillery-men at their guns, and the archers and arquebusiers stationed so as to give the assailants a warm reception.

On they came, with the companies, or irregular masses, into which the multitude was divided, rushing forward each in its own dense column, with many a gay banner displayed, and many a bright gleam of light reflected from helmet, arrow, and spear-head, as they were tossed about in their disorderly array. As they drew near the enclosure, the Aztecs set up a hideous yell, or rather that shrill whistle used in fight by the nations of Anahuac, which rose far above the sound of shell and atabal and their other rude instruments of warlike melody. They followed this by a tempest of mis-

siles,—stones, darts, and arrows,—which fell thick as rain on the besieged, while volleys of the same kind descended from the crowded terraces in the neighborhood.¹

The Spaniards waited until the foremost column had arrived within the best distance for giving effect to their fire, when a general discharge of artillery and arquebuses swept the ranks of the assailants and mowed them down by hundreds.² The Mexicans were familiar with the report of these formidable engines as they had been harmlessly discharged on some holiday festival; but never till now had they witnessed their murderous power. They stood aghast for a moment, as with bewildered looks they staggered under the fury of the fire;³ but, soon rallying, the bold barbarians uttered a piercing cry, and rushed forward over

¹ “Eran tantas las Piedras, que nos echaban con Hondas dentro en la Fortaleza, que no parecia sino que el Cielo las llovía; é las Flechas, y Tiraderas eran tantas, que todas las paredes y Patios estaban llenos, que casi no podíamos andar con ellas.” (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 134.) No wonder that they should have found some difficulty in wading through the arrows, if Herrera’s account be correct, that *forty cart-loads* of them were gathered up and burnt by the besieged every day! Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.

² “Luego sin tardanza se juntáron los Mexicanos, en gran copia, puestos á punto de Guerra, que no parecia, sino que habian salido debajo de tierra todos juntos, y comenzáron luego á dar grito y pelear, y los Españoles les comenzáron á responder de dentro con toda la artillería que de nuevo habian traído, y con toda la gente que de nuevo habia venido, y los Españoles hicieron gran destrozo en los Indios, con la artillería, arcabuzes, y ballestas y todo el otro artificio de pelear.” (Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.) The good father waxes eloquent in his description of the battle-scene.

³ The enemy presented so easy a mark, says Gomara, that the gunners loaded and fired with hardly the trouble of pointing their pieces. “Tan recio, que los artilleros sin asestar jugaban con los tiros.” Crónica, cap. 106.

the prostrate bodies of their comrades. A second and a third volley checked their career, and threw them into disorder, but still they pressed on, letting off clouds of arrows; while their comrades on the roofs of the houses took more deliberate aim at the combatants in the court-yard. The Mexicans were particularly expert in the use of the sling;⁴ and the stones which they hurled from their elevated positions on the heads of their enemies did even greater execution than the arrows. They glanced, indeed, from the mail-covered bodies of the cavaliers, and from those who were sheltered under the cotton panoply, or *escapil*. But some of the soldiers, especially the veterans of Cortés, and many of their Indian allies, had but slight defences, and suffered greatly under this stony tempest.

The Aztecs, meanwhile, had advanced close under the walls of the intrenchment, their ranks broken and disordered and their limbs mangled by the unintermitting fire of the Christians. But they still pressed on, under the very muzzles of the guns. They endeavored to scale the parapet, which, from its moderate height, was in itself a work of no great difficulty. But the moment they showed their heads above the rampart they were shot down by the unerring marksmen within, or stretched on the ground by a blow of a Tlascalan *maquahuitl*. Nothing daunted, others soon appeared to take the place of the fallen, and strove by raising themselves on the writhing bodies of

⁴“Hondas, que eran la mas fuerte arma de pelea que los Mejicanos tenian.” Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

their dying comrades, or by fixing their spears in the crevices of the wall, to surmount the barrier. But the attempt proved equally vain.

Defeated here, they tried to effect a breach in the parapet by battering it with heavy pieces of timber. The works were not constructed on those scientific principles by which one part is made to overlook and protect another. The besiegers, therefore, might operate at their pleasure, with but little molestation from the garrison within, whose guns could not be brought into a position to bear on them, and who could mount no part of their own works for their defence without exposing their persons to the missiles of the whole besieging army. The parapet, however, proved too strong for the efforts of the assailants. In their despair, they endeavored to set the Christian quarters on fire, shooting burning arrows into them, and climbing up so as to dart their firebrands through the embrasures. The principal edifice was of stone. But the temporary defences of the Indian allies, and other parts of the exterior works, were of wood. Several of these took fire, and the flame spread rapidly among the light, combustible materials. This was a disaster for which the besieged were wholly unprepared. They had little water, scarcely enough for their own consumption. They endeavored to extinguish the flames by heaping on earth. But in vain. Fortunately, the great building was of materials which defied the destroying element. But the fire raged in some of the outworks, connected with the parapet, with a fury which could only be checked by throwing

down a part of the wall itself, thus laying open a formidable breach. This, by the general's order, was speedily protected by a battery of heavy guns, and a file of arquebusiers, who kept up an incessant volley through the opening on the assailants.⁵

The fight now raged with fury on both sides. The walls around the palace belched forth an unintermitting sheet of flame and smoke. The groans of the wounded and dying were lost in the fiercer battle-cries of the combatants, the roar of the artillery, the sharper rattle of the musketry, and the hissing sound of Indian missiles. It was the conflict of the European with the American; of civilized man with the barbarian; of the science of the one with the rude weapons and warfare of the other. And as the ancient walls of Tenochtitlan shook under the thunders of the artillery, it announced that the white man, the destroyer, had set his foot within her precincts.⁶

Night at length came, and drew her friendly mantle over the contest. The Aztec seldom fought by night. It brought little repose, however, to the Spaniards, in hourly expectation of an assault; and they found abundant occupation in restoring the breaches in their defences and in repairing

⁵ "En la Fortaleza daban tan recio combate, que por muchas partes nos pusiéron fuego, y por la una se quemó mucha parte de ella, sin la poder remediar, hasta que la atajámos, cortando las paredes, y derrocando un pedazo que mató el fuego. E si no fuera por la mucha Guarda, que allí puse de Escopeteros, y Ballesteros, y otros tiros de pólvora, nos entraran á escala vista, sin los poder resistir." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 134.

⁶ Ibid., ubi supra.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 106.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.—Gonzalo de las Casas, Defensa, MS., Parte I, cap. 26.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

their battered armor. The beleaguering host lay on their arms through the night, giving token of their presence, now and then, by sending a stone or shaft over the battlements, or by a solitary cry of defiance from some warrior more determined than the rest, till all other sounds were lost in the vague, indistinct murmurs which float upon the air in the neighborhood of a vast assembly.

The ferocity shown by the Mexican seems to have been a thing for which Cortés was wholly unprepared. His past experience, his uninterrupted career of victory with a much feebler force at his command, had led him to underrate the military efficiency, as well as the valor, of the Indians. The apparent facility with which the Mexicans had acquiesced in the outrages on their sovereign and themselves had led him to hold their courage, in particular, too lightly. He could not believe the present assault to be anything more than a temporary ebullition of the populace, which would soon waste itself by its own fury. And he proposed, on the following day, to sally out and inflict such chastisement on his foes as should bring them to their senses and show who was master in the capital.

With early dawn, the Spaniards were up and under arms; but not before their enemies had given evidence of their hostility by the random missiles which from time to time were sent into the enclosure. As the gray light of morning advanced, it showed the besieging army, far from being diminished in numbers, filling up the great square and neighboring avenues in more dense array than on

the preceding evening. Instead of a confused, disorderly rabble, it had the appearance of something like a regular force, with its battalions distributed under their respective banners, the devices of which showed a contribution from the principal cities and districts in the Valley. High above the rest was conspicuous the ancient standard of Mexico, with its well-known cognizance, an eagle pouncing on an ocelot, emblazoned on a rich mantle of feather-work. Here and there priests might be seen mingling in the ranks of the besiegers, and, with frantic gestures, animating them to avenge their insulted deities.

The greater part of the enemy had little clothing save the *maxtlatl*, or sash round the loins. They were variously armed, with long spears tipped with copper or flint, or sometimes merely pointed and hardened in the fire. Some were provided with slings, and others with darts having two or three points, with long strings attached to them, by which, when discharged, they could be torn away again from the body of the wounded. This was a formidable weapon, much dreaded by the Spaniards. Those of a higher order yielded the terrible *maquahuitl*, with its sharp and brittle blades of obsidian. Amidst the motley bands of warriors were seen many whose showy dress and air of authority intimated persons of high military consequence. Their breasts were protected by plates of metal, over which was thrown the gay surcoat of feather-work. They wore casques resembling in their form the head of some wild and ferocious animal, crested with bristly hair, or over-

shadowed by tall and graceful plumes of many a brilliant color. Some few were decorated with the red fillet bound round the hair, having tufts of cotton attached to it, which denoted by their number that of the victories they had won, and their own pre-eminent rank among the warriors of the nation. The motley assembly plainly showed that priest, warrior, and citizen had all united to swell the tumult.

Before the sun had shot his beams into the Castilian quarters, the enemy were in motion, evidently preparing to renew the assault of the preceding day. The Spanish commander determined to anticipate them by a vigorous sortie, for which he had already made the necessary dispositions. A general discharge of ordnance and musketry sent death far and wide into the enemy's ranks, and, before they had time to recover from their confusion, the gates were thrown open, and Cortés, sallying out at the head of his cavalry, supported by a large body of infantry and several thousand Tlascalans, rode at full gallop against them. Taken thus by surprise, it was scarcely possible to offer much resistance. Those who did were trampled down under the horses' feet, cut to pieces with the broadswords, or pierced with the lances of the riders. The infantry followed up the blow, and the rout for the moment was general.

But the Aztecs fled only to take refuge behind a barricade, or strong work of timber and earth, which had been thrown across the great street through which they were pursued. Rallying on the other side, they made a gallant stand, and poured

in turn a volley of their light weapons on the Spaniards, who, saluted with a storm of missiles at the same time from the terraces of the houses, were checked in their career and thrown into some disorder.⁷

Cortés, thus impeded, ordered up a few pieces of heavy ordnance, which soon swept away the barricades and cleared a passage for the army. But it had lost the momentum acquired in its rapid advance. The enemy had time to rally and to meet the Spaniards on more equal terms. They were attacked in flank, too, as they advanced, by fresh battalions, who swarmed in from the adjoining streets and lanes. The canals were alive with boats filled with warriors, who with their formidable darts searched every crevice or weak place in the armor of proof, and made havoc on the unprotected bodies of the Tlascalans. By repeated and vigorous charges, the Spaniards succeeded in driving the Indians before them; though many, with a desperation which showed they loved vengeance better than life, sought to embarrass the movements of their horses by clinging to their legs, or, more successfully, strove to pull the riders from their saddles. And woe to the unfortunate cavalier who was thus dismounted,—to be despatched by the brutal *maquahuil*, or to be dragged on board a canoe to the bloody altar of sacrifice!

But the greatest annoyance which the Spaniards endured was from the missiles from the *azoteas*, consisting often of large stones, hurled with a force that would tumble the stoutest rider from

⁷ Carta del Ejército, MS.

his saddle. Galled in the extreme by these discharges, against which even their shields afforded no adequate protection, Cortés ordered fire to be set to the buildings. This was no very difficult matter, since, although chiefly of stone, they were filled with mats, cane-work, and other combustible materials, which were soon in a blaze. But the buildings stood separated from one another by canals and draw-bridges, so that the flames did not easily communicate to the neighboring edifices. Hence the labor of the Spaniards was incalculably increased, and their progress in the work of destruction—fortunately for the city—was comparatively slow.⁸ They did not relax their efforts, however, till several hundred houses had been consumed, and the miseries of a conflagration, in which the wretched inmates perished equally with the defenders, were added to the other horrors of the scene.

The day was now far spent. The Spaniards had been everywhere victorious. But the enemy, though driven back on every point, still kept the field. When broken by the furious charges of the cavalry, he soon rallied behind the temporary defences, which, at different intervals, had been thrown across the streets, and, facing about, renewed the fight with undiminished courage, till

⁸ “Están todas en el agua, y de casa á casa vna puente leuadiza, passalla á nado, era cosa muy peligrosa; porque desde las açuteas tirauan tanta piedra, y cantos, que era cosa perdida ponernos en ello. Y demas desto, en algunas casas que les poniamos fuego, tardaua vna casa en se quemar vn dia entero, y no se podia pegar fuego de vna casa á otra; lo vno, por estar apartadas la vna de otra el agua en medio; y lo otro, por ser de açuteas.” Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

the sweeping away of the barriers by the cannon of the assailants left a free passage for the movements of their horse. Thus the action was a succession of rallying and retreating, in which both parties suffered much, although the loss inflicted on the Indians was probably tenfold greater than that of the Spaniards. But the Aztecs could better afford the loss of a hundred lives than their antagonists that of one. And, while the Spaniards showed an array broken and obviously thinned in numbers, the Mexican army, swelled by the tributary levies which flowed in upon it from the neighboring streets, exhibited, with all its losses, no sign of diminution. At length, sated with carnage, and exhausted by toil and hunger, the Spanish commander drew off his men, and sounded a retreat.⁹

On his way back to his quarters, he beheld his friend the secretary Duero, in a street adjoining, unhorsed, and hotly engaged with a body of Mexicans, against whom he was desperately defending himself with his poniard. Cortés, roused at the sight, shouted his war-cry, and, dashing into the midst of the enemy, scattered them like chaff by the fury of his onset; then, recovering his friend's horse, he enabled him to remount, and the two

⁹ "The Mexicans fought with such ferocity," says Diaz, "that, if we had had the assistance on that day of ten thousand Hector, and as many Orlando, we should have made no impression on them. There were several of our troops," he adds, "who had served in the Italian wars, but neither there nor in the battles with the Turk had they ever seen anything like the desperation shown by these Indians." *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 126. See, also, for the last pages, *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 135,—*Ixtlilxochitl*, *Relaciones*, MS.,—*Probanza á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde*, MS.,—*Oviedo*, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 13,—*Gomara*, *Crónica*, cap. 196.

cavaliers, striking their spurs into their steeds, burst through their opponents and joined the main body of the army.¹⁰ Such displays of generous gallantry were not uncommon in these engagements, which called forth more feats of personal adventure than battles with antagonists better skilled in the science of war. The chivalrous bearing of the general was emulated in full measure by Sandoval, De Leon, Olid, Alvarado, Ordaz, and his other brave companions, who won such glory under the eye of their leader as prepared the way for the independent commands which afterwards placed provinces and kingdoms at their disposal.

The undaunted Aztecs hung on the rear of their retreating foes, annoying them at every step by fresh flights of stones and arrows; and, when the Spaniards had re-entered their fortress, the Indian host encamped around it, showing the same dogged resolution as on the preceding evening. Though true to their ancient habits of inaction during the night, they broke the stillness of the hour by insulting cries and menaces, which reached the ears of the besieged. "The gods have delivered you, at last, into our hands," they said; "Huitzilopochtli has long cried for his victims. The stone of sacrifice is ready. The knives are sharpened. The wild beasts in the palace are roaring for their offal. And the cages," they added, taunting the Tlascalans with their leanness, "are waiting for the false sons of Anahuac, who are to be fattened for the

¹⁰ Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 69.

festival!" These dismal menaces, which sounded fearfully in the ears of the besieged, who understood too well their import, were mingled with piteous lamentations for their sovereign, whom they called on the Spaniards to deliver up to them.

Cortés suffered much from a severe wound which he had received in the hand in the late action. But the anguish of his mind must have been still greater as he brooded over the dark prospect before him. He had mistaken the character of the Mexicans. Their long and patient endurance had been a violence to their natural temper, which, as their whole history proves, was arrogant and ferocious beyond that of most of the races of Anahuac. The restraint which, in deference to their monarch more than to their own fears, they had so long put on their natures, being once removed, their passions burst forth with accumulated violence. The Spaniards had encountered in the Tlascalan an open enemy, who had no grievance to complain of, no wrong to redress. He fought under the vague apprehension only of some coming evil to his country. But the Aztec, hitherto the proud lord of the land, was goaded by insult and injury, till he had reached that pitch of self-devotion which made life cheap in comparison with revenge. Armed thus with the energy of despair, the savage is almost a match for the civilized man; and a whole nation, moved to its depths by a common feeling, which swallows up all selfish considerations of personal interest and safety, becomes, whatever be its resources, like the earthquake and the tornado, the most formidable among the agencies of nature.

Considerations of this kind may have passed through the mind of Cortés, as he reflected on his own impotence to restrain the fury of the Mexicans, and resolved, in despite of his late supercilious treatment of Montezuma, to employ his authority to allay the tumult,—an authority so successfully exerted in behalf of Alvarado at an earlier stage of the insurrection. He was the more confirmed in his purpose on the following morning, when the assailants, redoubling their efforts, succeeded in scaling the works in one quarter and effecting an entrance into the enclosure. It is true, they were met with so resolute a spirit that not a man of those who entered was left alive. But, in the impetuosity of the assault, it seemed, for a few moments, as if the place was to be carried by storm.¹¹

Cortés now sent to the Aztec emperor to request his interposition with his subjects in behalf of the Spaniards. But Montezuma was not in the humor to comply. He had remained moodily in his quarters ever since the general's return. Disgusted with the treatment he had received, he had still further cause for mortification in finding himself the ally of those who were the open enemies of his nation. From his apartment he had beheld the tragical scenes in his capital, and seen another, the presumptive heir to his throne, taking the place which he should have occupied at the head of his warriors and fighting the battles of his country.¹²

¹¹ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 126.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 107.

¹² Cortés sent Marina to ascertain from Montezuma the name of the gallant chief, who could be easily seen from the walls animating and

Distressed by his position, indignant at those who had placed him in it, he coldly answered, "What have I to do with Malinche? I do not wish to hear from him. I desire only to die. To what a state has my willingness to serve him reduced me!"¹³ When urged still further to comply by Olid and Father Olmedo, he added, "It is of no use. They will neither believe me, nor the false words and promises of Malinche. You will never leave these walls alive." On being assured, however, that the Spaniards would willingly depart if a way were opened to them by their enemies, he at length—moved, probably, more by the desire to spare the blood of his subjects than of the Christians—consented to expostulate with his people.¹⁴

In order to give the greater effect to his presence, he put on his imperial robes. The *tilmatli*, his mantle of white and blue, flowed over his shoulders, held together by its rich clasp of the green *chalchivtl*. The same precious gem, with emeralds of uncommon size, set in gold, profusely ornamented other parts of his dress. His feet were shod with the golden sandals, and his brows covered by the *copilli*, or Mexican diadem, resembling in form the pontifical tiara. Thus attired, and surrounded by a guard of Spaniards and several

directing his countrymen. The emperor informed him that it was his brother Cuiclahua, the presumptive heir to his crown, and the same chief whom the Spanish commander had released a few days previous. Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.

¹³ "¿Que quiere de mí ya Malinche, que yo no deseo viuir ni oille? pues en tal estado por su causa mi ventura me ha traído." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

¹⁴ Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.

Aztec nobles, and preceded by the golden wand, the symbol of sovereignty, the Indian monarch ascended the central turret of the palace. His presence was instantly recognized by the people, and, as the royal retinue advanced along the battlements, a change, as if by magic, came over the scene. The clang of instruments, the fierce cries of the assailants, were hushed, and a deathlike stillness pervaded the whole assembly, so fiercely agitated, but a few moments before, by the wild tumult of war! Many prostrated themselves on the ground; others bent the knee; and all turned with eager expectation towards the monarch whom they had been taught to reverence with slavish awe, and from whose countenance they had been wont to turn away as from the intolerable splendors of divinity. Montezuma saw his advantage; and, while he stood thus confronted with his awe-struck people, he seemed to recover all his former authority and confidence, as he felt himself to be still a king. With a calm voice, easily heard over the silent assembly, he is said by the Castilian writers to have thus addressed them:

“Why do I see my people here in arms against the palace of my fathers? Is it that you think your sovereign a prisoner, and wish to release him? If so, you have acted rightly. But you are mistaken. I am no prisoner. The strangers are my guests. I remain with them only from choice, and can leave them when I list. Have you come to drive them from the city? That is unnecessary. They will depart of their own accord, if you will open a way for them. Return to your homes, then.

Lay down your arms. Show your obedience to me who have a right to it. The white men shall go back to their own land; and all shall be well again within the walls of Tenochtitlan."

As Montezuma announced himself the friend of the detested strangers, a murmur ran through the multitude; a murmur of contempt for the pusillanimous prince who could show himself so insensible to the insults and injuries for which the nation was in arms. The swollen tide of their passions swept away all the barriers of ancient reverence, and, taking a new direction, descended on the head of the unfortunate monarch, so far degenerated from his warlike ancestors. "Base Aztec," they exclaimed, "woman, coward! the white men have made you a woman,—fit only to weave and spin!" These bitter taunts were soon followed by still more hostile demonstrations. A chief, it is said, of high rank, bent a bow or brandished a javelin with an air of defiance against the emperor,¹⁵ when, in an instant, a cloud of stones and arrows descended on the spot where the royal train was gathered. The Spaniards appointed to protect his person had been thrown off their guard by the respectful deportment of the people during their lord's address. They now hastily interposed their bucklers. But it was too late. Montezuma was wounded by three of the missiles, one of which, a stone, fell with such violence on his head, near the temple, as brought him senseless to the ground. The Mexicans, shocked at their own sacrilegious

¹⁵ Acosta reports a tradition that Guatemozin, Montezuma's nephew, who himself afterwards succeeded to the throne, was the man that shot the first arrow. Lib. 7, cap. 26.

act, experienced a sudden revulsion of feeling, and, setting up a dismal cry, dispersed, panic-struck, in different directions. Not one of the multitudinous array remained in the great square before the palace!

The unhappy prince, meanwhile, was borne by his attendants to his apartments below. On recovering from the insensibility caused by the blow, the wretchedness of his condition broke upon him. He had tasted the last bitterness of degradation. He had been reviled, rejected, by his people. The meanest of the rabble had raised their hands against him. He had nothing more to live for. It was in vain that Cortés and his officers endeavored to soothe the anguish of his spirit and fill him with better thoughts. He spoke not a word in answer. His wound, though dangerous; might still, with skilful treatment, not prove mortal. But Montezuma refused all the remedies prescribed for it. He tore off the bandages as often as they were applied, maintaining, all the while, the most determined silence. He sat with eyes dejected, brooding over his fallen fortunes, over the image of ancient majesty and present humiliation. He had survived his honor. But a spark of his ancient spirit seemed to kindle in his bosom, as it was clear he did not mean to survive his disgrace. From this painful scene the Spanish general and his followers were soon called away by the new dangers which menaced the garrison.¹⁶

¹⁶ I have reported this tragical event, and the circumstances attending it, as they are given, in more or less detail, but substantially in the same way, by the most accredited writers of that and the following age,—several of them eye-witnesses. (See Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 126.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33,

cap. 47.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 136.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 88.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 70.—Acosta, ubi supra.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 5.) It is also confirmed by Cortés in the instrument granting to Montezuma's favorite daughter certain estates by way of dowry. (See Appendix, No. 12.) Don Thoan Cano, indeed, who married this princess, assured Oviedo that the Mexicans respected the person of the monarch so long as they saw him, and were not aware, when they discharged their missiles, that he was present, being hid from sight by the shields of the Spaniards. (See Appendix, No. 11.) This improbable statement is repeated by the Chaplain Gomara. (Crónica, cap. 107.) It is rejected by Oviedo, however, who says that Alvarado, himself present at the scene, in a conversation with him afterwards, explicitly confirmed the narrative given in the text. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.) The Mexicans gave a very different account of the transaction. According to them, Montezuma, together with the lords of Tezcuco and Tlatelolco, then detained as prisoners in the fortress by the Spaniards, were all strangled by means of the *garrote*, and their dead bodies thrown over the walls to their countrymen. I quote the original of Father Sahagun, who gathered the story from the Aztecs themselves:

"De esta manera se determináron los Españoles á morir ó vencer varonilmente; y así habláron á todos los amigos Indios, y todos ellos estuviéron firmes en esta determinacion: y lo primero que hiciéron fué que diéron garrote á todos los Señores que tenían presos, y los echáron muertos fuera del fuerte: y antes que esto hiciesen les dijéron muchas cosas, y les hiciéron saber su determinacion, y que de ellos habia de comenzar esta obra, y luego todos los demas habian de ser muertos á sus manos, dijéronles, no es posible que vuestros Idolos os libren de nuestras manos. Y desde que les hubiéron dado garrote, y viéron que estaban muertos, mandáronlos echar por las azoteas, fuera de la casa, en un lugar que se llama Tortuga de Piedra, porque allí estaba una piedra labrada á manera de Tortuga. Y desde que supiéron y viéron los de á fuera, que aquellos Señores tan principales habian sido muertos por las manos de los Españoles, luego tomóron los cuerpos, y les hiciéron sus exequias, al modo de su Idolatría, y quemáron sus cuerpos, y tomóron sus cenizas, y las pusieron en lugares apropiadas á sus dignidades y valor." Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 23.

It is hardly necessary to comment on the absurdity of this monstrous imputation, which, however, has found favor with some later writers. Independently of all other considerations, the Spaniards would have been slow to compass the Indian monarch's death, since, as the Tezcucan Ixtlilxochitl truly observes, it was the most fatal blow which could befall them, by dissolving the last tie which held them to the Mexicans. Hist. Chich., MS., ubi supra.

CHAPTER II

STORMING OF THE GREAT TEMPLE—SPIRIT OF THE
AZTECS—DISTRESSES OF THE GARRISON—SHARP
COMBATS IN THE CITY—DEATH OF MONTEZUMA

1520

OPPOSITE to the Spanish quarters, at only a few rods' distance, stood the great *teocalli* of Huitzilopochtli. This pyramidal mound, with the sanctuaries that crowned it, rising altogether to the height of near a hundred and fifty feet, afforded an elevated position that completely commanded the palace of Axayacatl, occupied by the Christians. A body of five or six hundred Mexicans, many of them nobles and warriors of the highest rank, had got possession of the *teocalli*, whence they discharged such a tempest of arrows on the garrison that no one could leave his defences for a moment without imminent danger; while the Mexicans, under shelter of the sanctuaries, were entirely covered from the fire of the besieged. It was obviously necessary to dislodge the enemy, if the Spaniards would remain longer in their quarters.

Cortés assigned this service to his chamberlain, Escobar, giving him a hundred men for the purpose, with orders to storm the *teocalli* and

set fire to the sanctuaries. But that officer was thrice repulsed in the attempt, and, after the most desperate efforts, was obliged to return with considerable loss and without accomplishing his object.

Cortés, who saw the immediate necessity of carrying the place, determined to lead the storming party himself. He was then suffering much from the wound in his left hand, which had disabled it for the present. He made the arm serviceable, however, by fastening his buckler to it,¹ and, thus crippled, sallied out at the head of three hundred chosen cavaliers and several thousand of his auxiliaries.

In the court-yard of the temple he found a numerous body of Indians prepared to dispute his passage. He briskly charged them; but the flat smooth stones of the pavement were so slippery that the horses lost their footing and many of them fell. Hastily dismounting, they sent back the animals to their quarters, and, renewing the assault, the Spaniards succeeded without much difficulty in dispersing the Indian warriors and opening a free passage for themselves to the *teocalli*. This building, as the reader may remember, was a huge pyramidal structure, about three hundred feet square at the base. A flight of stone steps on the outside, at one of the angles of the mound, led to a platform, or terraced walk, which passed round

¹ "Salí fuera de la Fortaleza, aunque manco de la mano izquierda de una herida que el primer día me habían dado: y liada la rodela en el brazo fu y á la Torre con algunos Españoles, que me siguiéron." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 138.

the building until it reached a similar flight of stairs directly over the preceding, that conducted to another landing as before. As there were five bodies or divisions of the *teocalli*, it became necessary to pass round its whole extent four times, or nearly a mile, in order to reach the summit, which, it may be recollected, was an open area, crowned only by the two sanctuaries dedicated to the Aztec deities.²

Cortés, having cleared a way for the assault, sprang up the lower stairway, followed by Alvarado, Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other gallant cavaliers of his little band, leaving a file of arquebusiers and a strong corps of Indian allies to hold the enemy in check at the foot of the monument. On the first landing, as well as on the several galleries above, and on the summit, the Aztec warriors were drawn up to dispute his passage. From their elevated position they showered down volleys of lighter missiles, together with heavy stones, beams, and burning rafters, which, thundering along the stairway, overturned the ascending Spaniards and carried desolation through their ranks. The more fortunate, eluding or springing over these obstacles, succeeded in gaining the first terrace; where, throwing themselves on their enemies, they compelled them, after a short resistance, to fall back. The assailants pressed on, effectually supported by a brisk fire of the musketeers from below, which

² See vol. ii. pp. 320-323.—I have ventured to repeat the description of the temple here, as it is important that the reader, who may perhaps not turn to the preceding pages, should have a distinct image of it in his own mind before beginning the account of the combat.

so much galled the Mexicans in their exposed situation that they were glad to take shelter on the broad summit of the *teocalli*.

Cortés and his comrades were close upon their rear, and the two parties soon found themselves face to face on this aerial battle-field, engaged in mortal combat in presence of the whole city, as well as of the troops in the court-yard, who paused, as if by mutual consent, from their own hostilities, gazing in silent expectation on the issue of those above. The area, though somewhat smaller than the base of the *teocalli*, was large enough to afford a fair field of fight for a thousand combatants. It was paved with broad, flat stones. No impediment occurred over its surface, except the huge sacrificial block, and the temples of stone which rose to the height of forty feet, at the farther extremity of the arena. One of these had been consecrated to the Cross. The other was still occupied by the Mexican war-god. The Christian and the Aztec contended for their religions under the very shadow of their respective shrines; while the Indian priests, running to and fro, with their hair wildly streaming over their sable mantles, seemed hovering in mid-air, like so many demons of darkness urging on the work of slaughter!

The parties closed with the desperate fury of men who had no hope but in victory. Quarter was neither asked nor given; and to fly was impossible. The edge of the area was unprotected by parapet or battlement. The least slip would be fatal; and the combatants, as they struggled in mortal agony, were sometimes seen to roll over the sheer





sides of the precipice together.³ Cortés himself is said to have had a narrow escape from this dreadful fate. Two warriors, of strong, muscular frames, seized on him, and were dragging him violently towards the brink of the pyramid. Aware of their intention, he struggled with all his force, and, before they could accomplish their purpose, succeeded in tearing himself from their grasp and hurling one of them over the walls with his own arm! The story is not improbable in itself, for Cortés was a man of uncommon agility and strength. It has been often repeated; but not by contemporary history.⁴

The battle lasted with unintermitting fury for three hours. The number of the enemy was double that of the Christians; and it seemed as if it were a contest which must be determined by numbers and brute force, rather than by superior science. But it was not so. The invulnerable armor of the Spaniard, his sword of matchless tem-

³ Many of the Aztecs, according to Sahagun, seeing the fate of such of their comrades as fell into the hands of the Spaniards on the narrow terraces below, voluntarily threw themselves headlong from the lofty summit and were dashed in pieces on the pavement. "Y los de arriba viendo á los de abajo muertos, y á los de arriba que los iban matando los que habian subido, comenzáron á arrojar del cu abajo, desde lo alto, los cuales todos morian despeñados, quebrados brazos y piernas, y hechos pedazos, porque el cu era muy alto; y otros los mesmos Españoles los arrojaban de lo alto del cu, y así todos cuantos allá habian subido de los Mexicanos, muriéron mala muerte." Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.

⁴ Among others, see Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9,—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 69,—and Solís, very circumstantially, as usual, *Conquista*, lib. 4, cap. 16.—The first of these authors had access to some contemporary sources, the chronicle of the old soldier, Ojeda, for example, not now to be met with. It is strange that so valiant an exploit should not have been communicated by Cortés himself, who cannot be accused of diffidence in such matters.

per, and his skill in the use of it, gave him advantages which far outweighed the odds of physical strength and numbers. After doing all that the courage of despair could enable men to do, resistance grew fainter and fainter on the side of the Aztecs. One after another they had fallen. Two or three priests only survived, to be led away in triumph by the victors. Every other combatant was stretched a corpse on the bloody arena, or had been hurled from the giddy heights. Yet the loss of the Spaniards was not inconsiderable. It amounted to forty-five of their best men; and nearly all the remainder were more or less injured in the desperate conflict.⁵

The victorious cavaliers now rushed towards the sanctuaries. The lower story was of stone; the two upper were of wood. Penetrating into their recesses, they had the mortification to find the image of the Virgin and the Cross removed.⁶ But in the other edifice they still beheld the grim figure of

⁵ Captain Diaz, a little loth sometimes, is emphatic in his encomiums on the valor shown by his commander on this occasion. "Here Cortés showed himself a very man, such as he always was. Oh, what a fighting, what a strenuous battle, did we have! It was a memorable thing to see us flowing with blood and full of wounds, and more than forty soldiers slain." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.) The pens of the old chroniclers keep pace with their swords in the display of this brilliant exploit:—"colla penna e colla spada," equally fortunate. See Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 138.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 106.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 22.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 69.

⁶ Archbishop Lorenzana is of opinion that this image of the Virgin is the same now seen in the church of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*! (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 138, nota.) In what way the Virgin survived the sack of the city and was brought to

Huitzilopochtli, with his censer of smoking hearts, and the walls of his oratory reeking with gore,—not improbably of their own countrymen! With shouts of triumph the Christians tore the uncouth monster from his niche, and tumbled him, in the presence of the horror-struck Aztecs, down the steps of the *teocalli*.^{*} They then set fire to the accursed building. The flames speedily ran up the slender towers, sending forth an ominous light over city, lake, and valley, to the remotest hut among the mountains. It was the funeral pyre of paganism, and proclaimed the fall of that sanguinary religion which had so long hung like a dark cloud over the fair regions of Anahuac!⁷

Having accomplished this good work, the Spaniards descended the winding slopes of the *teocalli* with more free and buoyant step, as if conscious that the blessing of Heaven now rested on their arms. They passed through the dusky files of Indian warriors in the court-yard, too much dismayed by the appalling scenes they had witnessed to offer

light again, he does not inform us. But the more difficult to explain, the more undoubted the miracle.

⁷ No achievement in the war struck more awe into the Mexicans than this storming of the great temple, in which the white men seemed to bid defiance equally to the powers of God and man. Hieroglyphical paintings minutely commemorating it were to be frequently found among the natives after the Conquest. The sensitive Captain Diaz intimates that those which he saw made full as much account of the wounds and losses of the Christians as the facts would warrant. (*Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.) It was the only way in which the conquered could take their revenge.

* [Sir Arthur Helps speaks, rather oddly, of Cortés having set fire to this image. Neither Cortés himself nor Bernal Diaz mentions any such attempt to burn what is described as a “huge block of basalt, covered with sculptured figures.”—K.]

resistance, and reached their own quarters in safety. That very night they followed up the blow by a sortie on the sleeping town, and burned three hundred houses, the horrors of conflagration being made still more impressive by occurring at the hour when the Aztecs, from their own system of warfare, were least prepared for them.⁸

Hoping to find the temper of the natives somewhat subdued by these reverses, Cortés now determined, with his usual policy, to make them a vantage-ground for proposing terms of accommodation. He accordingly invited the enemy to a parley, and, as the principal chiefs, attended by their followers, assembled in the great square, he mounted the turret before occupied by Montezuma, and made signs that he would address them. Marina, as usual, took her place by his side, as his interpreter. The multitude gazed with earnest curiosity on the Indian girl, whose influence with the Spaniards was well known, and whose connection with the general, in particular, had led the Aztecs to designate him by her Mexican name of Malinche.⁹ Cortés, speaking through the soft, musical tones of his mistress, told his audience they

⁸ "Sequenti nocte, nostri erumpentes in vna viarum arcis vicina, domos combussère tercentum: in altera plerasque e quibus arcis molestia fiebat. Ita nunc trucidando, nunc diruendo, et interdum vulnera recipiendo, in pontibus et in viis, diebus noctibusque multis laboratum est utrinque." (Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 6.) In the number of actions and their general result, namely, the victories, barren victories, of the Christians, all writers are agreed. But as to time, place, circumstance, or order, no two hold together. How shall the historian of the present day make a harmonious tissue out of these motley and many-colored threads?

⁹ It is the name by which she is still celebrated in the popular minstrelsy of Mexico. Was the famous Tlascalcan mountain, *sierra de*

must now be convinced that they had nothing further to hope from opposition to the Spaniards. They had seen their gods trampled in the dust, their altars broken, their dwellings burned, their warriors falling on all sides. "All this," continued he, "you have brought on yourselves by your rebellion. Yet, for the affection the sovereign whom you have so unworthily treated still bears you, I would willingly stay my hand, if you will lay down your arms and return once more to your obedience. But, if you do not," he concluded, "I will make your city a heap of ruins, and leave not a soul alive to mourn over it!"

But the Spanish commander did not yet comprehend the character of the Aztecs, if he thought to intimidate them by menaces. Calm in their exterior, and slow to move, they were the more difficult to pacify when roused; and now that they had been stirred to their inmost depths, it was no human voice that could still the tempest. It may be, however, that Cortés did not so much misconceive the character of the people. He may have felt that an authoritative tone was the only one he could assume with any chance of effect in his present position, in which milder and more conciliatory language would, by intimating a consciousness of inferiority, have too certainly defeated its own object.

It was true, they answered, he had destroyed their temples, broken in pieces their gods, massa-

Malinche,—anciently "Mattalcueye,"—named in compliment to the Indian damsel? At all events, it was an honor well merited from her adopted countrymen.

cred their countrymen. Many more, doubtless, were yet to fall under their terrible swords. But they were content so long as for every thousand Mexicans they could shed the blood of a single white man!¹⁰ "Look out," they continued, "on our terraces and streets; see them still thronged with warriors as far as your eyes can reach. Our numbers are scarcely diminished by our losses. Yours, on the contrary, are lessening every hour. You are perishing from hunger and sickness. Your provisions and water are failing. You must soon fall into our hands. *The bridges are broken down, and you cannot escape!*"¹¹ There will be too few of you left to glut the vengeance of our gods!" As they concluded, they sent a volley of arrows over the battlements, which compelled the Spaniards to descend and take refuge in their defences.

The fierce and indomitable spirit of the Aztecs filled the besieged with dismay. All, then, that they had done and suffered, their battles by day, their vigils by night, the perils they had braved, even the victories they had won, were of no avail. It was too evident that they had no longer the spring of ancient superstition to work upon in the breasts of the natives, who, like some wild beast that has burst the bonds of his keeper, seemed now

¹⁰ According to Cortés, they boasted, in somewhat loftier strain, they could spare twenty-five thousand for one: "á morir veinte y cinco mil de ellos, y uno de los nuestros." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 139.

¹¹ "Que todas las calzadas de las entradas de la ciudad eran deshechas, como de hecho passaba." Ibid., loc. cit.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

to swell and exult in the full consciousness of their strength. The annunciation respecting the bridges fell like a knell on the ears of the Christians. All that they had heard was too true; and they gazed on one another with looks of anxiety and dismay.

The same consequences followed which sometimes take place among the crew of a shipwrecked vessel. Subordination was lost in the dreadful sense of danger. A spirit of mutiny broke out, especially among the recent levies drawn from the army of Narvaez. They had come into the country from no motive of ambition, but attracted simply by the glowing reports of its opulence, and they had fondly hoped to return in a few months with their pockets well lined with the gold of the Aztec monarch. But how different had been their lot! From the first hour of their landing, they had experienced only trouble and disaster, privations of every description, sufferings unexampled, and they now beheld in perspective a fate yet more appalling. Bitterly did they lament the hour when they left the sunny fields of Cuba for these cannibal regions! And heartily did they curse their own folly in listening to the call of Velasquez, and still more in embarking under the banner of Cortés!¹²

They now demanded, with noisy vehemence, to be led instantly from the city, and refused to serve

¹² "Pues tambien quiero dezir las maldiciones que los de Narvaez echauan á Cortés, y las palabras que dezian, que renegauan dél, y de la tierra, y aun de Diego Velasquez, que acá les embió, que bien pacíficos estauan en sus casas en la Isla de Cuba, y estavan embelesados, y sin sentido." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

longer in defence of a place where they were cooped up like sheep in the shambles, waiting only to be dragged to slaughter. In all this they were rebuked by the more orderly, soldier-like conduct of the veterans of Cortés. These latter had shared with their general the day of his prosperity, and they were not disposed to desert him in the tempest. It was, indeed, obvious, on a little reflection, that the only chance of safety, in the existing crisis, rested on subordination and union, and that even this chance must be greatly diminished under any other leader than their present one.

Thus pressed by enemies without and by factions within, that leader was found, as usual, true to himself. Circumstances so appalling as would have paralyzed a common mind only stimulated his to higher action and drew forth all its resources. He combined, what is most rare, singular coolness and constancy of purpose with a spirit of enterprise that might well be called romantic. His presence of mind did not now desert him. He calmly surveyed his condition and weighed the difficulties which surrounded him, before coming to a decision. Independently of the hazard of a retreat in the face of a watchful and desperate foe, it was a deep mortification to surrender up the city where he had so long lorded it as a master; to abandon the rich treasures which he had secured to himself and his followers; to forego the very means by which he had hoped to propitiate the favor of his sovereign and secure an amnesty for his irregular proceedings. This, he well knew, must, after all, be dependent on success. To fly

now was to acknowledge himself further removed from the conquest than ever. What a close was this to a career so auspiciously begun! What a contrast to his magnificent vaunts! What a triumph would it afford to his enemies! The governor of Cuba would be amply revenged.

But, if such humiliating reflections crowded on his mind, the alternative of remaining, in his present crippled condition, seemed yet more desperate.¹³ With his men daily diminishing in strength and numbers, their provisions reduced so low that a small daily ration of bread was all the sustenance afforded to the soldier under his extraordinary fatigues,¹⁴ with the breaches every day widening in his feeble fortifications, with his ammunition, in fine, nearly expended, it would be impossible to maintain the place much longer—and none but men of iron constitutions and tempers, like the Spaniards, could have held it so long—against the enemy. The chief embarrassment was as to the time and manner in which it would be expedient to evacuate the city. The best route seemed to be that of Tlacopan (Tacuba). For the causeway, the most dangerous part of the road, was but two miles long in that direction, and would, therefore, place the fugitives, much sooner than either of the other great avenues, on terra firma. Before his

¹³ Notwithstanding this, in the petition or letter from Vera Cruz, addressed by the army to the Emperor Charles V., after the Conquest, the importunity of the soldiers is expressly stated as the principal motive that finally induced their general to abandon the city. *Carta del Ejército*, MS.

¹⁴ "The scarcity was such that the ration of the Indians was a small cake, and that of the Spaniards fifty grains of maize." Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9.

final departure, however, Cortés proposed to make another sally, in order to reconnoitre the ground, and, at the same time, divert the enemy's attention from his real purpose by a show of active operations.

For some days his workmen had been employed in constructing a military machine of his own invention. It was called a *manta*, and was contrived somewhat on the principle of the mantelets used in the wars of the Middle Ages. It was, however, more complicated, consisting of a tower made of light beams and planks, having two chambers, one over the other. These were to be filled with musketeers, and the sides were provided with loop-holes through which a fire could be kept up on the enemy. The great advantage proposed by this contrivance was to afford a defence to the troops against the missiles hurled from the terraces. These machines, three of which were made, rested on rollers, and were provided with strong ropes, by which they were to be dragged along the streets by the Tlascalan auxiliaries.¹⁵

The Mexicans gazed with astonishment on this

¹⁵ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 135.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 106.—Dr. Bird, in his picturesque romance of "Calavar," has made good use of these *mantas*, better, indeed, than can be permitted to the historian. He claims the privilege of the romancer; though it must be owned he does not abuse this privilege, for he has studied with great care the costume, manners, and military usages of the natives. He has done for them what Cooper has done for the wild tribes of the North,—touched their rude features with the bright coloring of a poetic fancy. He has been equally fortunate in his delineation of the picturesque scenery of the land. If he has been less so in attempting to revive the antique dialogue of the Spanish cavalier, we must not be surprised. Nothing is more difficult than the skilful execution of a modern antique. It requires all the genius and learning of Scott to execute it so that the connoisseur shall not detect the counterfeit.

warlike machinery, and, as the rolling fortresses advanced, belching forth fire and smoke from their entrails, the enemy, incapable of making an impression on those within, fell back in dismay. By bringing the *mantas* under the walls of the houses, the Spaniards were enabled to fire with effect on the mischievous tenants of the *azoteas*, and, when this did not silence them, by letting a ladder, or light draw-bridge, fall on the roof from the top of the *manta*, they opened a passage to the terrace, and closed with the combatants hand to hand. They could not, however, thus approach the higher buildings, from which the Indian warriors threw down such heavy masses of stone and timber as dislodged the planks that covered the machines, or, thundering against their sides, shook the frail edifices to their foundations, threatening all within with indiscriminate ruin. Indeed, the success of the experiment was doubtful, when the intervention of a canal put a stop to their further progress.

The Spaniards now found the assertion of their enemies too well confirmed. The bridge which traversed the opening had been demolished; and, although the canals which intersected the city were, in general, of no great width or depth, the removal of the bridges not only impeded the movements of the general's clumsy machines, but effectually disconcerted those of his cavalry. Resolving to abandon the *mantas*, he gave orders to fill up the chasm with stone, timber, and other rubbish drawn from the ruined buildings, and to make a new passageway for the army. While this labor was going on, the Aztec slingers and archers on the other side of

the opening kept up a galling discharge on the Christians, the more defenceless from the nature of their occupation. When the work was completed, and a safe passage secured, the Spanish cavaliers rode briskly against the enemy, who, unable to resist the shock of the steel-clad column, fell back with precipitation to where another canal afforded a similar strong position for defence.¹⁶

There were no less than seven of these canals intersecting the great street of 'Tlacopan,'¹⁷ and at every one the same scene was renewed, the Mexicans making a gallant stand and inflicting some loss, at each, on their persevering antagonists. These operations consumed two days, when, after incredible toil, the Spanish general had the satisfaction to find the line of communication completely re-established through the whole length of the avenue, and the principal bridges placed under strong detachments of infantry. At this juncture, when he had driven the foe before him to the farthest extremity of the street, where it touches on the causeway, he was informed that the Mexicans, disheartened by their reverses, desired to open a parley with him respecting the terms of an accommodation, and that their chiefs awaited his return for that purpose at the fortress. Overjoyed at the intelligence, he instantly rode back,

¹⁶ Carta del Exército, MS.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 140.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.

¹⁷ Clavigero is mistaken in calling this the street of Iztapalapan. (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 120.) It was not the street by which the Spaniards entered, but by which they finally left the city, and is correctly indicated by Lorenzana as that of Tlacopan,—or, rather, Tacuba, into which the Spaniards corrupted the name. See vol. ii. p. 322, note.

attended by Alvarado, Sandoval, and about sixty of the cavaliers, to his quarters.

The Mexicans proposed that he should release the two priests captured in the temple, who might be the bearers of his terms and serve as agents for conducting the negotiations. They were accordingly sent with the requisite instructions to their countrymen. But they did not return. The whole was an artifice of the enemy, anxious to procure the liberation of their religious leaders, one of whom was their *teoteuctli*, or high-priest, whose presence was indispensable in the probable event of a new coronation.

Cortés, meanwhile, relying on the prospects of a speedy arrangement, was hastily taking some refreshment with his officers, after the fatigues of the day, when he received the alarming tidings that the enemy were in arms again, with more fury than ever; that they had overpowered the detachments posted under Alvarado at three of the bridges and were busily occupied in demolishing them. Stung with shame at the facility with which he had been duped by his wily foe, or rather by his own sanguine hopes, Cortés threw himself into the saddle, and followed by his brave companions, galloped back at full speed to the scene of action. The Mexicans recoiled before the impetuous charge of the Spaniards. The bridges were again restored; and Cortés and his chivalry rode down the whole extent of the great street, driving the enemy like frightened deer, at the points of their lances. But, before he could return on his steps, he had the mortification to find that the indefatigable

foe, gathering from the adjoining lanes and streets, had again closed on his infantry, who, worn down by fatigue, were unable to maintain their position at one of the principal bridges. New swarms of warriors now poured in on all sides, overwhelming the little band of Christian cavaliers with a storm of stones, darts, and arrows, which rattled like hail on their armor and on that of their well-barbed horses. Most of the missiles, indeed, glanced harmless from the good panoplies of steel, or thick quilted cotton, but, now and then, one better aimed penetrated the joints of the harness and stretched the rider on the ground.

The confusion became greater around the broken bridge. Some of the horsemen were thrown into the canal, and their steeds floundered wildly about without a rider. Cortés himself, at this crisis, did more than any other to cover the retreat of his followers. While the bridge was repairing, he plunged boldly into the midst of the barbarians, striking down an enemy at every vault of his charger, cheering on his own men, and spreading terror through the ranks of his opponents by the well-known sound of his battle-cry. Never did he display greater hardihood, or more freely expose his person, emulating, says an old chronicler, the feats of the Roman Cocles.¹⁸ In

¹⁸ It is Oviedo who finds a parallel for his hero in the Roman warrior; the same, to quote the spirit-stirring legend of Macaulay,

“ who kept the bridge so well
In the brave days of old.”

“ Mui digno es Cortés que se compare este fecho suyo desta jornada al de Oracio Cocles, que se tocó de suso, porque con su esfuerço é lanza sola dió tanto lugar, que los caballos pudieran pasar, é hizo des-

this way he stayed the tide of assailants till the last man had crossed the bridge, when, some of the planks having given way, he was compelled to leap a chasm of full six feet in width, amidst a cloud of missiles, before he could place himself in safety.¹⁹ A report ran through the army that the general was slain. It soon spread through the city, to the great joy of the Mexicans, and reached the fortress, where the besieged were thrown into no less consternation. But, happily for them, it was false. He, indeed, received two severe contusions on the knee, but in other respects remained uninjured. At no time, however, had he been in such extreme danger; and his escape, and that of his companions, were esteemed little less than a miracle. More than one grave historian refers the preservation of the Spaniards to the watchful care of their patron Apostle, St. James, who, in these desperate conflicts, was beheld careering on his milk-white steed at the head of the Christian squadrons, with his sword flashing lightning, while a lady robed in white—supposed to be the Virgin—was distinctly seen by his side, throwing dust in the eyes of the infidel! The fact is attested both by Spaniards and Mexicans,—by the latter after

embarazar la puente é pasó, á pesar de los Enemigos, aunque con harto trabajo." *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

¹⁹ It was a fair leap, for a knight and horse in armor. But the general's own assertion to the emperor (*Rel. Seg.*, ap. *Lorenzana*, p. 142) is fully confirmed by *Oviedo*, who tells us he had it from several who were present: "Y segun lo que yo he entendido de algunos que presentes se halláron, demas de la resistencia de aquellos havia de la vna parte á la otra casi vn estado de saltar con el caballo sin le faltar muchas pedradas de diversas partes, é manos, é por ir el, é su caballo bien armados no los hiriéron; pero no dexó de quedar atormentado de los golpes que le diéron." *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., ubi supra.

their conversion to Christianity. Surely, never was there a time when the interposition of their tutelar saint was more strongly demanded.²⁰

The coming of night dispersed the Indian battalions, which, vanishing like birds of ill omen from the field, left the well-contested pass in possession of the Spaniards. They returned, however, with none of the joyous feelings of conquerors to their citadel, but with slow step and dispirited, with weapons hacked, armor battered, and fainting under the loss of blood, fasting, and fatigue. In this condition they had yet to learn the tidings of a fresh misfortune in the death of Montezuma.²¹

²⁰ Truly, "dignus vindice nodus"! The intervention of the celestial chivalry on these occasions is testified in the most unqualified manner by many respectable authorities. It is edifying to observe the combat going on in Oviedo's mind between the dictates of strong sense and superior learning, and those of the superstition of the age. It was an unequal combat, with odds sorely against the former, in the sixteenth century. I quote the passage as characteristic of the times. "Afirman que se vido el Apóstol Santiago á caballo peleando sobre vn caballo blanco en favor de los Christianos; é decian los Indios que el caballo con los pies y manos é con la boca mataba muchos dellos, de forma, que en poco discurso de tiempo no pareció Indio, é reposáron los Christianos lo restante de aquel dia. Ya sé que los incrédulos ó poco devotos dirán, que mi ocupacion en esto destos miraglos, pues no los ví, es superflua, ó perder tiempo novelando, y yo hablo, que esto é mas se puede creer, pues que los gentiles é sin fé, Idólatras escriben, que ovo grandes misterios é miraglos en sus tiempos, é aquellos sabemos que eran causados é fechos por el Diablo, pues mas fácil cosa es á Dios é á la immaculata Virgen Nuestra Señora é al glorioso Apóstol Santiago, é á los santos é amigos de Jesu Christo hacer esos miraglos, que de suso estan dichos, é otros maiores." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

²¹ "Multi restiterunt lapidibus et iaculis confossi, fuit et Cortesius grauitur percussus, pauci evaserunt incolumes, et hi adeò languidi, vt neque lacertos erigere quirent. Postquam vero se in arcem receperunt, non commode satis conditas dapes, quibus reficerentur, inueniunt, nec forte asperi maicii panis bucellas, aut aquam potabilem, de vino aut carnibus sublata erat cura." (Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6.) See also, for the hard fighting described in the last

The Indian monarch had rapidly declined, since he had received his injury, sinking, however, quite as much under the anguish of a wounded spirit as under disease. He continued in the same moody state of insensibility as that already described; holding little communication with those around him, deaf to consolation, obstinately rejecting all medical remedies as well as nourishment. Perceiving his end approach, some of the cavaliers present in the fortress, whom the kindness of his manners had personally attached to him, were anxious to save the soul of the dying prince from the sad doom of those who perish in the darkness of unbelief. They accordingly waited on him, with Father Olmedo at their head, and in the most earnest manner implored him to open his eyes to the error of his creed, and consent to be baptized. But Montezuma—whatever may have been suggested to the contrary—seems never to have faltered in his hereditary faith, or to have contemplated becoming an apostate; for surely he merits that name in its most odious application, who, whether Christian or pagan, renounces his religion without conviction of its falsehood.²² Indeed, it was a too implicit reliance on its oracles which had led him to give

pages, Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 13,—*Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 140–142,—*Carta del Ejército*, MS.,—Gonzalo de las Casas, *Defensa*, MS., Parte 1, cap. 26,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 9, 10,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 107.

²² The sentiment is expressed with singular energy in the verses of Voltaire:

" Mais renoncer aux dieux que l'on croit dans son cœur,
C'est le crime d'un lâche, et non pas une erreur;
C'est trahir à la fois, sous un masque hypocrite,
Et le dieu qu'on préfère, et le dieu que l'on quitte;
C'est mentir au Ciel même, à l'univers, à soi."

ALZIRE, acte 5, sc. 5.

such easy confidence to the Spaniards. His intercourse with them had, doubtless, not sharpened his desire to embrace their communion; and the calamities of his country he might consider as sent by his gods to punish him for his hospitality to those who had desecrated and destroyed their shrines.²³

When Father Olmedo, therefore, kneeling at his side, with the uplifted crucifix, affectionately besought him to embrace the sign of man's redemption, he coldly repulsed the priest, exclaiming, "I have but a few moments to live, and will not at this hour desert the faith of my fathers."²⁴

²³ Camargo, the Tlascalcan convert, says he was told by several of the Conquerors that Montezuma was baptized at his own desire in his last moments, and that Cortés and Alvarado stood sponsors on the occasion. "Muchos afirman de los conquistadores que yo conocí, que estando en el artículo de la muerte, pidió agua de bautismo é que fué batizado y murió Cristiano, aunque en esto hay grandes dudas y diferentes pareceres; mas como digo que de personas fidedignas conquistadores de los primeros desta tierra de quien fuimos informados, supimos que murió batizado y Cristiano, é que fueron sus padrinos del bautismo Fernando Cortés y Don Pedro de Alvarado." (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) According to Gomara, the Mexican monarch desired to be baptized before the arrival of Narvaez. The ceremony was deferred till Easter, that it might be performed with greater effect. But in the hurry and bustle of the subsequent scenes it was forgotten, and he died without the stain of infidelity having been washed away from him. (Crónica, cap. 107.) Torquemada, not often a Pyrrhonist where the honor of the faith is concerned, rejects these tales as irreconcilable with the subsequent silence of Cortés himself, as well as of Alvarado, who would have been loud to proclaim an event so long in vain desired by them. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 70.) The criticism of the father is strongly supported by the fact that neither of the preceding accounts is corroborated by writers of any weight, while they are contradicted by several, by popular tradition, and, it may be added, by one another.

²⁴ "Respondió, Que por la media hora que le quedaba de vida, no se quería apartar de la religion de sus Padres." (Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.) "Ya he dicho," says Diaz, "la tristeza que todos nosotros huvimos por ello, y aun al Frayle de la Merced, que siempre estaua con él, y no le pudo atraer á que se bolbiesse Christiano." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 127.

One thing, however, seemed to press heavily on Montezuma's mind. This was the fate of his children, especially of three daughters, whom he had by his two wives; for there were certain rites of marriage which distinguished the lawful wife from the concubine. Calling Cortés to his bedside, he earnestly commended these children to his care, as "the most precious jewels that he could leave him." He besought the general to interest his master, the emperor, in their behalf, and to see that they should not be left destitute, but be allowed some portion of their rightful inheritance. "Your lord will do this," he concluded, "if it were only for the friendly offices I have rendered the Spaniards, and for the love I have shown them,—though it has brought me to this condition! But for this I bear them no ill will."²⁵ Such, according to Cortés himself, were the words of the dying monarch. Not long after, on the 30th of June, 1520,²⁶ he expired in the arms of some of his own nobles, who still remained faithful in their attendance on

²⁵ *Aunque no le pesaba dello*; literally, "although he did not repent of it." But this would be rather too much for human nature to assert; and it is probable the language of the Indian prince underwent some little change as it was sifted through the interpretation of Marina. The Spanish reader will find the original conversation, as reported by Cortés himself, in the remarkable document in the Appendix, No. 12. The general adds that he faithfully complied with Montezuma's request, receiving his daughters, after the Conquest, into his own family, where, *agreeably to their royal father's desire, they were baptized*, and instructed in the doctrines and usages of the Christian faith. They were afterwards married to Castilian hidalgos, and handsome dowries were assigned them by the government. See note 36 of this chapter.

²⁶ I adopt Clavigero's chronology, which cannot be far from truth. (Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 131.) And yet there are reasons for supposing he must have died at least a day sooner.

his person. "Thus," exclaims a native historian, one of his enemies, a Tlascalan, "thus died the unfortunate Montezuma, who had swayed the sceptre with such consummate policy and wisdom, and who was held in greater reverence and awe than any other prince of his lineage, or any, indeed, that ever sat on a throne in this Western World. With him may be said to have terminated the royal line of the Aztecs, and the glory to have passed away from the empire, which under him had reached the zenith of its prosperity."²⁷ "The tidings of his death," says the old Castilian chronicler, Diaz, "were received with real grief by every cavalier and soldier in the army who had had access to his person; for we all loved him as a father,—and no wonder, seeing how good he was."²⁸ This simple but emphatic testimony to his desert, at such a time, is in itself the best refutation of the suspicions occasionally entertained of his fidelity to the Christians.²⁹

²⁷ "De suerte que le tiráron una pedrada con una honda y le diéron en la cabeza, de que vino á morir el desdichado Rey, habiendo gobernado este nuevo Mundo con la mayor prudencia y gobierno que se puede imaginar, siendo el mas tenido y reverenciado y adorado Señor que en el mundo ha habido, y en su linaje, como es cosa pública y notoria en toda la maquina deste Nuevo Mundo, donde con la muerte de tan gran Señor se acabáron los Reyes Culhuaques Mejicanos, y todo su poder y mando, estando en la mayor felicidad de su monarquía; y así no hay de que fiar en las cosas desta vida sino en solo Dios." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

²⁸ "Y Cortés lloró por él, y todos nuestros Capitanes, y soldados: é hombres huvo entre nosotros de los que le conocíamos, y tratá-uamos, que tan llorado fué, como si fuera nuestro padre, y no nos hemos de maravillar dello, viendo que tan bueno era." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 126.

²⁹ "He loved the Christians," says Herrera, "as well as could be judged from appearances." (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.) "They say," remarks the general's chaplain, "that Montezunia,

It is not easy to depict the portrait of Montezuma in its true colors, since it has been exhibited to us under two aspects, of the most opposite and contradictory character. In the accounts gathered of him by the Spaniards on coming into the country, he was uniformly represented as bold and warlike, unscrupulous as to the means of gratifying his ambition, hollow and perfidious, the terror of his foes, with a haughty bearing which made him feared even by his own people. They found him, on the contrary, not merely affable and gracious, but disposed to waive all the advantages of his own position, and to place them on a footing with himself; making their wishes his law; gentle even to

though often urged to it, never consented to the death of a Spaniard, nor to the injury of Cortés, whom he loved exceedingly. But there are those who dispute this." (Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 107.) Don Thoan Cano assured Oviedo that during all the troubles of the Spaniards with the Mexicans, both in the absence of Cortés and after his return, the emperor did his best to supply the camp with provisions. (See Appendix, No. 11.) And, finally, Cortés himself, in an instrument already referred to, dated six years after Montezuma's death, bears emphatic testimony to the good will he had shown the Spaniards, and particularly acquits him of any share in the late rising, which, says the Conqueror, "I had trusted to suppress through his assistance." (See Appendix, No. 12.)—The Spanish historians, in general,—notwithstanding an occasional intimation of a doubt as to his good faith towards their countrymen,—make honorable mention of the many excellent qualities of the Indian prince. Solís, however, the most eminent of all, dismisses the account of his death with the remark that "his last hours were spent in breathing vengeance and maledictions against his people; until he surrendered up to Satan—with whom he had frequent communication in his lifetime—the eternal possession of his soul!" (*Conquista de México*, lib. 4, cap. 15.) Fortunately, the historiographer of the Indians could know as little of Montezuma's fate in the next world as he appears to have known of it in this. Was it bigotry, or a desire to set his own hero's character in a brighter light, which led him thus unworthily to darken that of his Indian rival?

effeminacy in his deportment, and constant in his friendship while his whole nation was in arms against them. Yet these traits, so contradictory, were truly enough drawn. They are to be explained by the extraordinary circumstances of his position.

When Montezuma ascended the throne, he was scarcely twenty-three years of age. Young, and ambitious of extending his empire, he was continually engaged in war, and is said to have been present himself in nine pitched battles.³⁰ He was greatly renowned for his martial prowess, for he belonged to the *Quachictin*, the highest military order of his nation, and one into which but few even of its sovereigns had been admitted.³¹ In later life, he preferred intrigue to violence, as more consonant to his character and priestly education. In this he was as great an adept as any prince of his time, and, by arts not very honorable to himself, succeeded in filching away much of the territory of his royal kinsman of Tezcuco. Severe in the administration of justice, he made important reforms in the arrangement of the tribunals. He introduced other innovations in the royal household, creating new officers, introducing a lavish magnificence and forms of courtly etiquette unknown to his ruder predecessors. He was, in short, most attentive to all that concerned the ex-

³⁰ "Dicen que venció nueve Batallas, i otros nueve Campos, en desafío vno á vno." Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 107.

³¹ One other only of his predecessors, Tizoc, is shown by the Aztec paintings to have belonged to this knightly order, according to Clavigero. *Stor. del Messico*, tom. ii. p. 140.

terior and pomp of royalty.³² Stately and decorous, he was careful of his own dignity, and might be said to be as great an "actor of majesty" among the barbarian potentates of the New World as Louis the Fourteenth was among the polished princes of Europe.

He was deeply tinctured, moreover, with that spirit of bigotry which threw such a shade over the latter days of the French monarch. He received the Spaniards as the beings predicted by his oracles. The anxious dread with which he had evaded their proffered visit was founded on the same feelings which led him so blindly to resign himself to them on their approach. He felt himself rebuked by their superior genius. He at once conceded all that they demanded,—his treasures, his power, even his person. For their sake, he forsook his wonted occupations, his pleasures, his most familiar habits. He might be said to forego his nature, and, as his subjects asserted, to change his sex and become a woman. If we cannot refuse our contempt for the pusillanimity of the Aztec monarch, it should be mitigated by the consideration that this pusillanimity sprung from his superstition, and that superstition in the savage is the substitute for religious principle in the civilized man.

It is not easy to contemplate the fate of Montezuma without feelings of the strongest compas-

³² "Era mas cauteloso, y ardidoso, que valeroso. En las Armas, y modo de su gobierno, fué muy justiciero; en las cosas tocantes á ser estimado y tenido en su Dignidad y Majestad Real de condicion muy severo, aunque cuerdo y gracioso." Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 88.

sion;—to see him thus borne along the tide of events beyond his power to avert or control; to see him, like some stately tree, the pride of his own Indian forests, towering aloft in the pomp and majesty of its branches, by its very eminence a mark for the thunderbolt, the first victim of the tempest which was to sweep over its native hills! When the wise king of Tezcuco addressed his royal relative at his coronation, he exclaimed, “ Happy the empire which is now in the meridian of its prosperity, for the sceptre is given to one whom the Almighty has in his keeping; and the nations shall hold him in reverence!”³³ Alas! the subject of this auspicious invocation lived to see his empire melt away like the winter’s wreath; to see a strange race drop, as it were, from the clouds on his land; to find himself a prisoner in the palace of his fathers, the companion of those who were the enemies of his gods and his people; to be insulted, reviled, trodden in the dust, by the meanest of his subjects, by those who, a few months previous, had trembled at his glance; drawing his last breath in the halls of the stranger,—a lonely outcast in the heart of his own capital! He was the sad victim of destiny, —a destiny as dark and irresistible in its march as that which broods over the mythic legends of antiquity!³⁴

³³ The whole address is given by Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 68.

³⁴ “ Τέχνη δ' ἀνάγκης ἀσθενεστέρα μακρῶ.
 Τίς οὖν ἀνάγκης ἐστὶν οἰακοστρόφος;
 Μοῖραι τρίμορφοι, μνήμονές τ' Ἑριννύες.
 Τούτων ἅρ' ἑλὶς ἐστὶν ἀσθενέστερος;
 Οὐκ οὖν ἂν ἐκφύγοι γε τὴν πεπρωμένην.”

ÆSCHYL., *Prometh.*, v. 522-526.

Montezuma, at the time of his death, was about forty-one years old, of which he reigned eighteen. His person and manners have been already described. He left a numerous progeny by his various wives, most of whom, having lost their consideration after the Conquest, fell into obscurity, as they mingled with the mass of the Indian population.³⁵ Two of them, however, a son and a daughter, who embraced Christianity, became the founders of noble houses in Spain.³⁶ The government, willing to show its gratitude for the large extent of empire derived from their ancestor, conferred on them ample estates and important hereditary honors; and the counts of Montezuma and Tula, intermarrying with the best blood of Castile, intimated by their names and titles their

³⁵ Señor de Calderon, the late Spanish minister at Mexico, informs me that he has more than once passed by an Indian dwelling where the Indians in his suite made a reverence, saying it was occupied by a descendant of Montezuma.

³⁶ This son, baptized by the name of Pedro, was descended from one of the royal concubines. Montezuma had two lawful wives. By the first of these, named Teçalco, he had a son, who perished in the flight from Mexico; and a daughter named Tecuichpo, who embraced Christianity and received the name of Isabella. She was married, when very young, to her cousin Guatemozin, and lived long enough after his death to give her hand to four Castilians, all of honorable family. From two of these, Don Thoan Cano and Don Juan Andrada, descended the illustrious families of the Cano and Andrada Montezuma. From the last came the counts of Miravalle noticed by Humboldt (*Essai politique*, tom. ii. p. 73, note). See Alaman, *Disertaciones históricas*, tom. ii. p. 325.—Montezuma, by his second wife, the princess Acatlan, left two daughters, named, after their conversion, Maria and Leonor. The former died without issue. Doña Leonor married a Spanish cavalier, Cristóval de Valderama, from whom descended the family of the Sotelos de Montezuma.—The royal genealogy is minutely exhibited in a Memorial setting forth the claims of Montezuma's grandsons to certain property in right of their respective mothers. The document, which is without date, is among the MSS. of Muñoz.

illustrious descent from the royal dynasty of Mexico.³⁷

Montezuma's death was a misfortune to the Spaniards. While he lived, they had a precious pledge in their hands, which, in extremity, they might possibly have turned to account. Now the last link was snapped which connected them with the natives of the country. But, independently of interested feelings, Cortés and his officers were much affected by his death, from personal consid-

³⁷ It is interesting to know that a descendant of the Aztec emperor, Don José Sarmiento Valladares, count of Montezuma, ruled as viceroy, from 1697 to 1701, over the dominions of his barbaric ancestors. (Humboldt, *Essai politique*, tom. ii. p. 93, note.) * Solís speaks of this noble house, grandees of Spain, who intermingled their blood with that of the Guzmans and the Mendozas. Clavigero has traced their descent from the emperor's son Iohualicahua, or Dom Pedro Montezuma (as he was called after his baptism), down to the close of the eighteenth century. (See Solís, *Conquista*, lib. 4, 15.—Clavigero, *Stor. del Messico*, tom. i. p. 302, tom. iii. p. 132.) The title of count was bestowed on the head of the family by Philip the Second, in 1556. In 1765, under Charles the Third, the count of Montezuma was made a grandee of Spain, and he was in receipt of a yearly pension of 40,000 *pesos*. (Alaman, *Disertaciones históricas*, tom. i. p. 159.) The last of the line, of whom I have been able to obtain any intelligence, died not long since in this country. He was very wealthy, having large estates in Spain,—but was not, as it appears, very wise. When seventy years old or more, he passed over to Mexico, in the vain hope that the nation, in deference to his descent, might place him on the throne of his Indian ancestors, so recently occupied by the presumptuous Iturbide. But the modern Mexicans, with all their detestation of the old Spaniards, showed no respect for the royal blood of the Aztecs. The unfortunate nobleman retired to New Orleans, where he soon after put an end to his existence by blowing out his brains,—not for ambition, however, if report be true, but disappointed love!

* [Señor Alaman, in a note on this passage, says it was not the viceroy, but his wife, Doña María Gerónima Montezuma, who was a descendant of the Aztec emperor. She was third countess of Montezuma in her own right, her husband's title being duke of Atlixco.—K.]

erations, and, when they gazed on the cold remains of the ill-starred monarch, they may have felt a natural compunction, as they contrasted his late flourishing condition with that to which his friendship for them had reduced him.

The Spanish commander showed all respect for his memory. His body, arrayed in its royal robes, was laid decently on a bier, and borne on the shoulders of his nobles to his subjects in the city. What honors, if any, indeed, were paid to his remains, is uncertain. A sound of wailing, distinctly heard in the western quarters of the capital, was interpreted by the Spaniards into the moans of a funeral procession, as it bore the body to be laid among those of his ancestors, under the princely shades of Chapultepec.³⁸ Others state that it was removed to a burial-place in the city named Copalco, and there burned with the usual solemnities and signs of lamentation by his chiefs, but not without some unworthy insults from the Mexican populace.³⁹ Whatever be the fact, the people, occupied with the stirring scenes in which they were engaged, were probably not long mindful of the monarch who had taken no share in their late patriotic movements. Nor is it strange that the very memory of his sepulchre should be effaced in the terrible catastrophe which afterwards overwhelmed the capital and swept away every landmark from its surface.

³⁸ Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 107.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 10.

³⁹ Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 7.

CHAPTER III

COUNCIL OF WAR—SPANIARDS EVACUATE THE CITY—NOCHE TRISTE, OR “THE MELANCHOLY NIGHT” — TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER — HALT FOR THE NIGHT—AMOUNT OF LOSSES .

1520

THERE was no longer any question as to the expediency of evacuating the capital. The only doubt was as to the time of doing so, and the route. The Spanish commander called a council of officers to deliberate on these matters. It was his purpose to retreat on Tlascala, and in that capital to decide, according to circumstances, on his future operations. After some discussion, they agreed on the causeway of Tlacopan as the avenue by which to leave the city. It would, indeed, take them back by a circuitous route, considerably longer than either of those by which they had approached the capital. But, for that reason, it would be less likely to be guarded, at least suspected; and the causeway itself, being shorter than either of the other entrances, would sooner place the army in comparative security on the main land.

There was some difference of opinion in respect to the hour of departure. The daytime, it was argued by some, would be preferable, since it

would enable them to see the nature and extent of their danger and to provide against it. Darkness would be much more likely to embarrass their own movements than those of the enemy, who were familiar with the ground. A thousand impediments would occur in the night, which might prevent their acting in concert, or obeying, or even ascertaining, the orders of the commander. But, on the other hand, it was urged that the night presented many obvious advantages in dealing with a foe who rarely carried hostilities beyond the day. The late active operations of the Spaniards had thrown the Mexicans off their guard, and it was improbable they would anticipate so speedy a departure of their enemies. With celerity and caution they might succeed, therefore, in making their escape from the town, possibly over the causeway, before their retreat should be discovered; and, could they once get beyond that pass of peril, they felt little apprehension for the rest.

These views were fortified, it is said, by the counsels of a soldier named Botello, who professed the mysterious science of judicial astrology. He had gained credit with the army by some predictions which had been verified by the events; those lucky hits which make chance pass for calculation with the credulous multitude.¹

¹ Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—The astrologer predicted that Cortés would be reduced to the greatest extremity of distress, and afterwards come to great honor and fortune. (Bernal Díaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 128.) He showed himself as cunning in his art as the West Indian sibyl who foretold the destiny of the unfortunate Josephine.

This man recommended to his countrymen by all means to evacuate the place in the night, as the hour most propitious to them, although he should perish in it. The event proved the astrologer better acquainted with his own horoscope than with that of others.²

It is possible Botello's predictions had some weight in determining the opinion of Cortés. Superstition was the feature of the age, and the Spanish general, as we have seen, had a full measure of its bigotry. Seasons of gloom, moreover, dispose the mind to a ready acquiescence in the marvellous. It is, however, quite as probable that he made use of the astrologer's opinion, finding it coincided with his own, to influence that of his men and inspire them with higher confidence. At all events, it was decided to abandon the city that very night.

The general's first care was to provide for the safe transportation of the treasure. Many of the common soldiers had converted their share of the prize, as we have seen, into gold chains, collars, or other ornaments, which they easily carried about their persons. But the royal fifth, together with that of Cortés himself, and much of the rich booty of the principal cavaliers, had been converted into bars and wedges of solid gold, and deposited in one of the strong apartments of the palace. Cortés delivered the share belonging to the crown to the royal officers, assigning them one of the strongest horses, and a guard of Castilian sol-

² "Pues al astrólogo Botello, no le aprouechó su astrología, que tambien allí murió." Bernal Diaz, ubi supra.

diers, to transport it.³ Still, much of the treasure, belonging both to the crown and to individuals, was necessarily abandoned, from the want of adequate means of conveyance. The metal lay scattered in shining heaps along the floor, exciting the cupidity of the soldiers. "Take what you will of it," said Cortés to his men. "Better you should have it, than these Mexican hounds.⁴ But be careful not to overload yourselves. He travels safest in the dark night who travels lightest." His own more wary followers took heed to his counsel, helping themselves to a few articles of least bulk, though it might be, of greatest value.⁵ But the troops of Narvaez, pining for riches of which they had heard so much and hitherto seen so little, showed no such discretion. To them it seemed as

³ The disposition of the treasure has been stated with some discrepancy, though all agree as to its ultimate fate. The general himself did not escape the imputation of negligence, and even peculation, most unfounded, from his enemies. The account in the text is substantiated by the evidence, under oath, of the most respectable names in the expedition, as given in the instrument already more than once referred to. "Hizo sacar el oro é joyas de sus Altezas é le dió é entregó á los otros oficiales Alcaldes é Regidores, é les dixo á la rason que así se lo entregó, que todos viesen el mejor modo é manera que habia para lo poder salvar, que él allí estaba para por su parte hacer lo que fuese posible é poner su persona á qualquier trance é riesgo que sobre lo salvar le viniese. . . . El qual les dió para ello una muy buena yegua, é quatro ó cinco Españoles de mucha confianza, á quien se encargó la dha yegua cargado con el otro oro." Probanza á pedimento de Juan de Lexalde.

⁴ "Desde aquí se lo doi, como se ha de quedar aquí perdido entre estos perros." Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

⁵ Captain Diaz tells us that he contented himself with four *chalchivittl*,—the green stone so much prized by the natives,—which he cunningly picked out of the royal coffers before Cortés' majordomo had time to secure them. The prize proved of great service, by supplying him the means of obtaining food and medicine when in great extremity, afterwards, from the people of the country. Ibid., loc. cit.

if the very mines of Mexico were turned up before them, and, rushing on the treacherous spoil, they greedily loaded themselves with as much of it, not merely as they could accommodate about their persons, but as they could stow away in wallets, boxes, or any other means of conveyance at their disposal.⁶

Cortés next arranged the order of march. The van, composed of two hundred Spanish foot, he placed under the command of the valiant Gonzalo de Sandoval, supported by Diego de Ordaz, Francisco de Lujo, and about twenty other cavaliers. The rear-guard, constituting the strength of the infantry, was intrusted to Pedro de Alvarado and Velasquez de Leon. The general himself took charge of the "battle," or centre, in which went the baggage, some of the heavy guns, most of which, however, remained in the rear, the treasure, and the prisoners. These consisted of a son and two daughters of Montezuma, Cacama, the deposed lord of Tezcucó, and several other nobles, whom Cortés retained as important pledges in his future negotiations with the enemy. The Tlascalans were distributed pretty equally among the three divisions; and Cortés had under his immediate command a hundred picked soldiers, his own veterans most attached to his service, who, with Cristóval de Olid, Francisco de Morla, Alonso de Avila, and two or three other cavaliers, formed a select corps, to act wherever occasion might require.

The general had already superintended the con-

⁶ Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., ubi supra.

struction of a portable bridge to be laid over the open canals in the causeway. This was given in charge to an officer named Magarino, with forty soldiers under his orders, all pledged to defend the passage to the last extremity. The bridge was to be taken up when the entire army had crossed one of the breaches, and transported to the next. There were three of these openings in the causeway, and most fortunate would it have been for the expedition if the foresight of the commander had provided the same number of bridges. But the labor would have been great, and time was short.⁷

At midnight the troops were under arms, in readiness for the march. Mass was performed by Father Olmedo, who invoked the protection of the Almighty through the awful perils of the night. The gates were thrown open, and on the first of July, 1520, the Spaniards for the last time sallied forth from the walls of the ancient fortress, the scene of so much suffering and such indomitable courage.⁸

The night was cloudy, and a drizzling rain,

⁷ Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 109.—*Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 143.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 47.

⁸ There is some difficulty in adjusting the precise date of their departure, as, indeed, of most events in the Conquest; attention to chronology being deemed somewhat superfluous by the old chroniclers. Ixtlilxochitl, Gomara, and others fix the date at July 10th. But this is wholly contrary to the letter of Cortés, which states that the army reached Tlascala on the eighth of July, not the tenth, as Clavigero misquotes him (*Stor. del Messico*, tom. iii. pp. 135, 136, nota); and from the general's accurate account of their progress each day, it appears that they left the capital on the last night of June, or rather the morning of July 1st. It was the night, he also adds, following the affair of the bridges in the city. *Comp. Rel. Seg.*, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 142-149.

which fell without intermission, added to the obscurity. The great square before the palace was deserted, as, indeed, it had been since the fall of Montezuma. Steadily, and as noiselessly as possible, the Spaniards held their way along the great street of Tlacopan, which so lately had resounded with the tumult of battle. All was now hushed in silence; and they were only reminded of the past by the occasional presence of some solitary corpse, or a dark heap of the slain, which too plainly told where the strife had been hottest. As they passed along the lanes and alleys which opened into the great street, or looked down the canals, whose polished surface gleamed with a sort of ebon lustre through the obscurity of night, they easily fancied that they discerned the shadowy forms of their foe lurking in ambush and ready to spring on them. But it was only fancy; and the city slept undisturbed even by the prolonged echoes of the tramp of the horses and the hoarse rumbling of the artillery and baggage-trains. At length, a lighter space beyond the dusky line of buildings showed the van of the army that it was emerging on the open causeway. They might well have congratulated themselves on having thus escaped the dangers of an assault in the city itself, and that a brief time would place them in comparative safety on the opposite shore. But the Mexicans were not all asleep.

As the Spaniards drew near the spot where the street opened on the causeway, and were preparing to lay the portable bridge across the uncovered breach, which now met their eyes, several Indian

sentinels, who had been stationed at this, as at the other approaches to the city, took the alarm, and fled, rousing their countrymen by their cries. The priests, keeping their night-watch on the summit of the *teocallis*, instantly caught the tidings and sounded their shells, while the huge drum in the desolate temple of the war-god sent forth those solemn tones, which, heard only in seasons of calamity, vibrated through every corner of the capital. The Spaniards saw that no time was to be lost. The bridge was brought forward and fitted with all possible expedition. Sandoval was the first to try its strength, and, riding across, was followed by his little body of chivalry, his infantry, and Tlascalan allies, who formed the first division of the army. Then came Cortés and his squadrons, with the baggage, ammunition-wagons, and a part of the artillery. But before they had time to defile across the narrow passage, a gathering sound was heard, like that of a mighty forest agitated by the winds. It grew louder and louder, while on the dark waters of the lake was heard a plashing noise, as of many oars. Then came a few stones and arrows striking at random among the hurrying troops. They fell every moment faster and more furious, till they thickened into a terrible tempest, while the very heavens were rent with the yells and war-cries of myriads of combatants, who seemed all at once to be swarming over land and lake!

The Spaniards pushed steadily on through this arrowy sleet, though the barbarians, dashing their canoes against the sides of the causeway, clambered

up and broke in upon their ranks. But the Christians, anxious only to make their escape, declined all combat except for self-preservation. The cavaliers, spurring forward their steeds, shook off their assailants and rode over their prostrate bodies, while the men on foot with their good swords or the butts of their pieces drove them headlong again down the sides of the dike.

But the advance of several thousand men, marching, probably, on a front of not more than fifteen or twenty abreast, necessarily required much time, and the leading files had already reached the second breach in the causeway before those in the rear had entirely traversed the first.⁹ Here they halted, as they had no means of effecting a passage, smarting all the while under unintermitting volleys from the enemy, who were clustered thick on the waters around this second opening. Sorely distressed, the van-guard sent repeated messages to the rear to demand the portable bridge. At length the last of the army had crossed, and Magarino and his sturdy followers endeavored to raise the ponderous framework. But it stuck fast in the sides of the dike. In vain they strained every nerve. The weight of so many men and horses, and above all of the heavy artillery, had wedged the timbers so firmly in the stones and earth that it was beyond their power to dis-

⁹ [This second breach, says Ramirez, "the scene of the rout and slaughter of the Spaniards, was in front of *San Hipolito*, where a chapel was built, to commemorate the event, and dedicated to the *Martyrs*,—though assuredly none of those who had fallen there had any claim to the crown of martyrdom." *Notas y Esclarecimientos*, p. 104.]

lodge them. Still they labored amidst a torrent of missiles, until, many of them slain, and all wounded, they were obliged to abandon the attempt.

The tidings soon spread from man to man, and no sooner was their dreadful import comprehended than a cry of despair arose, which for a moment drowned all the noise of conflict. All means of retreat were cut off. Scarcely hope was left. The only hope was in such desperate exertions as each could make for himself. Order and subordination were at an end. Intense danger produced intense selfishness. Each thought only of his own life. Pressing forward, he trampled down the weak and the wounded, heedless whether it were friend or foe. The leading files, urged on by the rear, were crowded on the brink of the gulf. Sandoval, Ordaz, and the other cavaliers dashed into the water. Some succeeded in swimming their horses across. Others failed, and some, who reached the opposite bank, being overturned in the ascent, rolled headlong with their steeds into the lake. The infantry followed pellmell, heaped promiscuously on one another, frequently pierced by the shafts or struck down by the war-clubs of the Aztecs; while many an unfortunate victim was dragged half stunned on board their canoes, to be reserved for a protracted but more dreadful death.¹⁰

The carnage raged fearfully along the length

¹⁰ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 143.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13, 47.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 24.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo,

of the causeway. Its shadowy bulk presented a mark of sufficient distinctness for the enemy's missiles, which often prostrated their own countrymen in the blind fury of the tempest. Those nearest the dike, running their canoes alongside, with a force that shattered them to pieces, leaped on the land, and grappled with the Christians, until both came rolling down the side of the causeway together. But the Aztec fell among his friends, while his antagonist was borne away in triumph to the sacrifice. The struggle was long and deadly. The Mexicans were recognized by their white cotton tunics, which showed faint through the darkness. Above the combatants rose a wild and discordant clamor, in which horrid shouts of vengeance were mingled with groans of agony, with invocations of the saints and the blessed Virgin, and with the screams of women;¹¹ for there were several women, both natives and Spaniards, who had accompanied the Christian camp. Among these, one named María de Estrada is particularly noticed for the courage she displayed, battling with broadsword and target like the stanchest of the warriors.¹²

dec. 5, cap. 6.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 4.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS.

¹¹ "Pues la grito, y lloros, y lástimas q̄ deziã demãdando socorro: Ayudadme, q̄ me ahogo, otros: Socorredme, q̄ me matã, otros demãdando ayuda á N. Señora Santa María, y á Señor Santiago." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

¹² "In this combat Maria de Estrada, oblivious of her sex, showed herself most valorous, and armed with sword and shield did marvelous deeds, rushing into the midst of the enemy with a courage and spirit equal to that of the bravest of men. . . . This lady became the wife of Pedro Sanchez Farfan, and the village of Tetela was granted to them *en encomienda*." Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 72.





The opening in the causeway, meanwhile, was filled up with the wreck of matter which had been forced into it, ammunition-wagons, heavy guns, bales of rich stuffs scattered over the waters, chests of solid ingots, and bodies of men and horses, till over this dismal ruin a passage was gradually formed, by which those in the rear were enabled to clamber to the other side.¹³ Cortés, it is said, found a place that was fordable, where, halting, with the water up to his saddle-girths, he endeavored to check the confusion, and lead his followers by a safer path to the opposite bank. But his voice was lost in the wild uproar, and finally, hurrying on with the tide, he pressed forward with a few trusty cavaliers, who remained near his person, to the van; but not before he had seen his favorite page, Juan de Salazar, struck down, a corpse, by his side. Here he found Sandoval and his companions, halting before the third and last breach, endeavoring to cheer on their followers to surmount it. But their resolution faltered. It was wide and deep; though the passage was not so closely beset by the enemy as the preceding ones. The cavaliers again set the example by plunging into the water. Horse and foot followed as they could, some swimming, others with dying grasp clinging to the manes and tails of the struggling

¹³ Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 128.—“Por la gran priesa que daban de ambas partes de el camino, comenzáron á caer en aquel foso, y cayéron juntos, que de Españoles, que de Indios y de caballos, y de cargas, el foso se hinchó hasta arriba, cayendo los unos sobre los otros, y los otros sobre los otros, de manera que todos los del bagage quedáron allí ahogados, y los de la retaguardia pasáron sobre los muertos.” Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 24.

animals. Those fared best, as the general had predicted, who travelled lightest; and many were the unfortunate wretches who, weighed down by the fatal gold which they loved so well, were buried with it in the salt floods of the lake.¹⁴ Cortés, with his gallant comrades, Olid, Morla, Sandoval, and some few others, still kept in the advance, leading his broken remnant off the fatal causeway. The din of battle lessened in the distance; when the rumor reached them that the rear-guard would be wholly overwhelmed without speedy relief. It seemed almost an act of desperation; but the generous hearts of the Spanish cavaliers did not stop to calculate danger when the cry for succor reached them. Turning their horses' bridles, they galloped back to the theatre of action, worked their way through the press, swam the canal, and placed themselves in the thick of the *mêlée* on the opposite bank.¹⁵

The first gray of the morning was now coming over the waters. It showed the hideous confusion of the scene which had been shrouded in the obscurity of night. The dark masses of combatants, stretching along the dike, were seen struggling for mastery, until the very causeway on which they stood appeared to tremble, and reel to and fro, as

¹⁴ "E los que habian ido con Narvaez arrojáronse en la sala, é cargáronse de aquel oro é plata quanto pudiéron; pero los menos lo gozaron, porque la carga no los dexaba pelear, é los Indios los tomaban vivos cargados; é á otros llevaban arrastrando, é á otros mataban allí; E así no se salvaron sino los desocupados é que iban en la delantera." Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.

¹⁵ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

if shaken by an earthquake; while the bosom of the lake, as far as the eye could reach, was darkened by canoes crowded with warriors, whose spears and bludgeons, armed with blades of "volcanic glass," gleamed in the morning light.

The cavaliers found Alvarado unhorsed, and defending himself with a poor handful of followers against an overwhelming tide of the enemy. His good steed, which had borne him through many a hard fight, had fallen under him.¹⁶ He was himself wounded in several places, and was striving in vain to rally his scattered column, which was driven to the verge of the canal by the fury of the enemy, then in possession of the whole rear of the causeway, where they were reinforced every hour by fresh combatants from the city. The artillery in the earlier part of the engagement had not been idle, and its iron shower, sweeping along the dike, had mowed down the assailants by hundreds. But nothing could resist their impetuosity. The front ranks, pushed on by those behind, were at length forced up to the pieces, and, pouring over them like a torrent, overthrew men and guns in one general ruin. The resolute charge of the Spanish cavaliers, who had now arrived, created a temporary check, and gave time for their countrymen to make a feeble rally. But they were speedily borne down by the returning flood. Cortés and his companions were compelled to plunge again into the lake,—though all did not escape.

¹⁶ "Luego encontraron con Pedro de Alvarado bien herido con vna lança en la mano á pie, que la yegua alaçana ya se la auian muerto." Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

Alvarado stood on the brink for a moment, hesitating what to do. Unhorsed as he was, to throw himself into the water, in the face of the hostile canoes that now swarmed around the opening, afforded but a desperate chance of safety. He had but a second for thought. He was a man of powerful frame, and despair gave him unnatural energy. Setting his long lance firmly on the wreck which strewed the bottom of the lake, he sprung forward with all his might, and cleared the wide gap at a leap! Aztecs and Tlascalans gazed in stupid amazement, exclaiming, as they beheld the incredible feat, "This is truly the *Tonatiuh*,—the child of the Sun!"¹⁷ The breadth of the opening is not given. But it was so great that the valorous captain Diaz, who well remembered the place, says the leap was impossible to any man.¹⁸ Other contemporaries, however, do not discredit the story.¹⁹

¹⁷ "Y los amigos vista tan gran hazaña quedáron maravillados, y al instante que esto viéron se arrojáron por el suelo postrados por tierra en señal de hecho tan heroico, espantable y raro, que ellos no habian visto hacer á ningun hombre, y ansi adoráron al Sol, comiendo puñados de tierra, arrancando yervas del campo, diciendo á grandes voces, verdaderamente que este hombre es *hijo del Sol*." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) This writer consulted the process instituted by Alvarado's heirs, in which they set forth the merits of their ancestor, as attested by the most valorous captains of the Tlascalan nation, present at the Conquest. It *may be* that the famous leap was among these "merits" of which the historian speaks. M. de Humboldt, citing Camargo, so considers it. (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 75.) This would do more than anything else to establish the fact. But Camargo's language does not seem to me necessarily to warrant the inference.

¹⁸ "Se llama aora la puente del salto de Alvarado: y platicauamos muchos soldados sobre ello, y no hallavamos razon, ni soltura de vn hombre que tal saltasse." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

¹⁹ Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, ubi supra.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Which last author, however, frankly says that many who had seen the place de-

It was, beyond doubt, matter of popular belief at the time; it is to this day familiarly known to every inhabitant of the capital; and the name of the *Salto de Alvarado*, "Alvarado's Leap," given to the spot, still commemorates an exploit which rivalled those of the demi-gods of Grecian fable.²⁰

Cortés and his companions now rode forward to

clared that it seemed to them impossible. "Fué tan estremado de grande el salto, que á muchos hombres que han visto aquello, he oído decir que parece cosa imposible haberlo podido saltar ninguno hombre humano. En fin él lo saltó é ganó por ello la vida, é perdiéronla muchos que atras quedaban."

²⁰ The spot is pointed out to every traveller. It is where a ditch, of no great width, is traversed by a small bridge not far from the western extremity of the Alameda. A house, lately erected there, may somewhat interfere with the meditations of the antiquary. (Alaman, *Disertaciones históricas*, tom. i. p. 202.) As the place received its name in Alvarado's time, the story could scarcely have been discountenanced by him. But, since the length of the leap, strange to say, is nowhere given, the reader can have no means of passing his own judgment on its probability. [Unfortunately for the lovers of the marvellous, another version is now given of the account of Alvarado's escape, which deprives him of the glory claimed for him by this astounding feat. In the process against him, which was not brought to light till several years after the present work was published, one of the charges was that he fled from the field, leaving his soldiers to their fate, and escaping by means of a beam which had survived the demolition of the bridge and still stretched across the chasm from one side to the other. The chief, in his reply, said that, far from deserting his men, they deserted him, and that he did not fly till he was wounded and his horse killed under him, when he escaped across the breach, was taken up behind a mounted cavalier on the other side, and carried out of the fray. That he should not have alluded to the account given of the manner of his escape, so much less glorious than that usually claimed for him, may lead us to infer that it was too true to be disputed. Such is the judgment of Señor Ramirez, who, in his account of the affair, tells us that, far from being an object of admiration, Alvarado's escape was, in his own time, deemed rather worthy of punishment, as an act of desertion which cost the lives of many brave followers whom he left behind him. (See the *Proceso de Alvarado*, pp. 53, 68, with the caustic remarks of Ramirez, pp. xiv., 288, et seq.) It is natural that a descendant of the conquered race should hold in peculiar detestation the most cruel persecutor of the Aztecs.]

the front, where the troops, in a loose, disorderly manner, were marching off the fatal causeway. A few only of the enemy hung on their rear, or annoyed them by occasional flights of arrows from the lake. The attention of the Aztecs was diverted by the rich spoil that strewed the battle-ground; fortunately for the Spaniards, who, had their enemy pursued with the same ferocity with which he had fought, would, in their crippled condition, have been cut off, probably, to a man. But little molested, therefore, they were allowed to defile through the adjacent village, or suburbs, it might be called, of Popotla.²¹

The Spanish commander there dismounted from his jaded steed, and, sitting down on the steps of an Indian temple, gazed mournfully on the broken files as they passed before him. What a spectacle did they present! The cavalry, most of them dismounted, were mingled with the infantry, who dragged their feeble limbs along with difficulty; their shattered mail and tattered garments dripping with the salt ooze, showing through their rents many a bruise and ghastly wound; their bright arms soiled, their proud crests and banners gone, the baggage, artillery, all, in short, that constitutes the pride and panoply of glorious war, forever lost. Cortés, as he looked wistfully on

²¹ "Fué Dios servido de que los Mejicanos se ocupasen en recoger los despojos de los muertos, y las riquezas de oro y piedras que llevaba el bagage, y de sacar los muertos de aquel acequia, y á los caballos y otros bestias. Y por esto no siguiéron el alcanze, y los Españoles pudieron ir poco á poco por su camino sin tener mucha molestia de enemigos." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 25.

their thin and disordered ranks, sought in vain for many a familiar face, and missed more than one dear companion who had stood side by side with him through all the perils of the Conquest. Though accustomed to control his emotions, or, at least, to conceal them, the sight was too much for him. He covered his face with his hands, and the tears, which trickled down, revealed too plainly the anguish of his soul.²²

He found some consolation, however, in the sight of several of the cavaliers on whom he most relied. Alvarado, Sandoval, Olid, Ordaz, Avila, were yet safe. He had the inexpressible satisfaction, also, of learning the safety of the Indian interpreter, Marina, so dear to him, and so important to the army. She had been committed, with a daughter of a Tlascalan chief, to several of that nation. She was fortunately placed in the van, and the faithful escort had carried her securely through all the dangers of the night. Aguilar, the other interpreter, had also escaped. And it was with no less satisfaction that Cortés learned the safety of the ship-builder, Martin Lopez.²³ The general's solicitude for the fate of this man, so indispensable, as he proved, to the success of his subsequent operations, showed that, amidst all his affliction, his indomitable spirit was looking forward to the hour of vengeance.

Meanwhile, the advancing column had reached the neighboring city of Tlacopan (Tacuba), once

²² Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 89.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 109.

²³ Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 12.

the capital of an independent principality. There it halted in the great street, as if bewildered and altogether uncertain what course to take; like a herd of panic-struck deer, who, flying from the hunters, with the cry of hound and horn still ringing in their ears, look wildly around for some glen or copse in which to plunge for concealment. Cortés, who had hastily mounted and rode on to the front again, saw the danger of remaining in a populous place, where the inhabitants might sorely annoy the troops from the *azotecas*, with little risk to themselves. Pushing forward, therefore, he soon led them into the country. There he endeavored to reform his disorganized battalions and bring them to something like order.²⁴

Hard by, at no great distance on the left, rose an eminence, looking towards a chain of mountains which fences in the Valley on the west. It was called the Hill of Otoncalpolco, and sometimes the Hill of Montezuma.²⁵ It was crowned with an Indian *teocalli*, with its large outworks of stone covering an ample space, and by its strong position, which commanded the neighboring plain, promised a good place of refuge for the exhausted troops. But the men, disheartened and stupefied by their late reverses, seemed for the moment in-

²⁴ "Tacuba," says that interesting traveller, Latrobe, "lies near the foot of the hills, and is at the present day chiefly noted for the large and noble church which was erected there by Cortés. And hard by you trace the lines of a Spanish encampment. I do not hazard the opinion, but it might appear by the coincidence, that this was the very position chosen by Cortés for his intrenchment, after the retreat just mentioned, and before he commenced his painful route towards Otumba." (Rambler in Mexico, Letter 5.) It is evident, from our text, that Cortés could have thrown up no intrenchment here, at least on his retreat from the capital.

²⁵ Lorenzana, Viage, p. xiii.

capable of further exertion; and the place was held by a body of armed Indians. Cortés saw the necessity of dislodging them if he would save the remains of his army from entire destruction. The event showed he still held a control over their wills stronger than circumstances themselves. Cheering them on, and supported by his gallant cavaliers, he succeeded in infusing into the most sluggish something of his own intrepid temper, and led them up the ascent in face of the enemy. But the latter made slight resistance, and, after a few feeble volleys of missiles which did little injury, left the ground to the assailants.

It was covered by a building of considerable size, and furnished ample accommodations for the diminished numbers of the Spaniards. They found there some provisions; and more, it is said, were brought to them, in the course of the day, from some friendly Otomi villages in the neighborhood. There was, also, a quantity of fuel in the courts, destined to the uses of the temple. With this they made fires to dry their drenched garments, and busily employed themselves in dressing one another's wounds, stiff and extremely painful from exposure and long exertion. Thus refreshed, the weary soldiers threw themselves down on the floor and courts of the temple, and soon found the temporary oblivion which Nature seldom denies even in the greatest extremity of suffering.²⁶

There was one eye in that assembly, however,

²⁶ Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 24.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 128.—Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 89.

which we may well believe did not so speedily close. For what agitating thoughts must have crowded on the mind of their commander, as he beheld his poor remnant of followers thus huddled together in this miserable bivouac! And this was all that survived of the brilliant array with which but a few weeks since he had entered the capital of Mexico! Where now were his dreams of conquest and empire? And what was he but a luckless adventurer, at whom the finger of scorn would be uplifted as a madman? Whichever way he turned, the horizon was almost equally gloomy, with scarcely one light spot to cheer him. He had still a weary journey before him, through perilous and unknown paths, with guides of whose fidelity he could not be assured. And how could he rely on his reception at Tlascala, the place of his destination,—the land of his ancient enemies, where, formerly as a foe, and now as a friend, he had brought desolation to every family within its borders?

Yet these agitating and gloomy reflections, which might have crushed a common mind, had no power over that of Cortés; or, rather, they only served to renew his energies and quicken his perceptions, as the war of the elements purifies and gives elasticity to the atmosphere. He looked with an unblenching eye on his past reverses; but, confident in his own resources, he saw a light through the gloom which others could not. Even in the shattered relics which lay around him, resembling in their haggard aspect and wild attire a horde of famished outlaws, he discerned the materials out of which to reconstruct his ruined fortunes.

In the very hour of discomfiture and general despondency, there is no doubt that his heroic spirit was meditating the plan of operations which he afterwards pursued with such dauntless constancy.

The loss sustained by the Spaniards on this fatal night, like every other event in the history of the Conquest, is reported with the greatest discrepancy. If we believe Cortés' own letter, it did not exceed one hundred and fifty Spaniards and two thousand Indians. But the general's bulletins, while they do full justice to the difficulties to be overcome and the importance of the results, are less scrupulous in stating the extent either of his means or of his losses. Thoan Cano, one of the cavaliers present, estimates the slain at eleven hundred and seventy Spaniards and eight thousand allies. But this is a greater number than we have allowed for the whole army. Perhaps we may come nearest the truth by taking the computation of Gomara, who was the chaplain of Cortés, and who had free access, doubtless, not only to the general's papers, but to other authentic sources of information. According to him, the number of Christians killed and missing was four hundred and fifty, and that of natives four thousand. This, with the loss sustained in the conflicts of the previous week, may have reduced the former to something more than a third, and the latter to a fourth, or perhaps fifth, of the original force with which they entered the capital.²⁷ The brunt of the action fell on

²⁷ The table below may give the reader some idea of the discrepancies in numerical estimates, even among eye-witnesses, and writers who, having access to the actors, are nearly of equal authority:

the rear-guard, few of whom escaped. It was formed chiefly of the soldiers of Narvaez, who fell the victims, in some measure, of their cupidity.²⁸ Forty-six of the cavalry were cut off, which with previous losses reduced the number in this branch of the service to twenty-three, and some of these in very poor condition. The greater part of the treasure, the baggage, the general's papers, including his accounts, and a minute diary of transactions since leaving Cuba,—which, to posterity at least, would have been of more worth than the

	Killed and Missing.		
Cortes, ap. Lorenzana, p. 145,	150	Spaniards,	2000 Indians
Cano, ap. Oviedo, lib. 33, cap. 54,	1170	"	8000 "
Probanza, etc.,	200	"	2000 "
Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., lib. 33, cap. 13,	150	"	2000 "
Camargo,	450	"	4000 "
Gomara, cap. 109,	450	"	4000 "
Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., cap. 88,	450	"	4000 "
Sahagun, lib. 12, cap. 24,	300	"	2000 "
Herrera, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 12,	150	"	4000 "

Bernal Diaz does not take the trouble to agree with himself. After stating that the rear, on which the loss fell heaviest, consisted of 120 men, he adds, in the same paragraph, that 150 of these were slain, which number swells to 200 in a few lines further! Falstaff's men in buckram! See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.—Cano's estimate embraces, it is true, those—but their number was comparatively small—who perished subsequently on the march. The same authority states that 270 of the garrison, ignorant of the proposed departure of their countrymen, were perfidiously left in the palace of Axayacatl, where they surrendered on terms, but were subsequently all sacrificed by the Aztecs! (See Appendix, No. 11.) The improbability of this monstrous story, by which the army with all its equipage could leave the citadel without the knowledge of so many of their comrades,—and this be permitted, too, at a juncture which made every man's co-operation so important,—is too obvious to require refutation. Herrera records, what is much more probable, that Cortés gave particular orders to the captain, Ojeda, to see that none of the sleeping or wounded should, in the hurry of the moment, be overlooked in their quarters. Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.

²⁸ "Pues de los de Narvaez, todos los mas en las puentes quedáron, cargados de oro." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

gold,—had been swallowed up by the waters.²⁹ The ammunition, the beautiful little train of artillery with which Cortés had entered the city, were all gone. Not a musket even remained, the men having thrown them away, eager to disencumber themselves of all that might retard their escape on that disastrous night. Nothing, in short, of their military apparatus was left, but their swords, their crippled cavalry, and a few damaged cross-bows, to assert the superiority of the European over the barbarian.

The prisoners, including, as already noticed, the children of Montezuma and the cacique of Tezucuco, all perished by the hands of their ignorant countrymen, it is said, in the indiscriminate fury of the assault. There were, also, some persons of consideration among the Spaniards whose names were inscribed on the same bloody roll of slaughter. Such was Francisco de Morla, who fell by the side of Cortés on returning with him to the rescue. But the greatest loss was that of Juan Velasquez de Leon, who, with Alvarado, had command of the rear. It was the post of danger on that night, and he fell, bravely defending it, at an early part of the retreat. He was an excellent officer, possessed of many knightly qualities, though somewhat haughty in his bearing, being one of the best-connected cavaliers in the army. The near relation of the governor of Cuba, he looked coldly, at first,

²⁹ According to Diaz, part of the gold intrusted to the *Tlascalans* convoy was preserved. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 136.) From the document already cited,—Probanza de Villa Segura, MS.,—it appears that it was a Castilian guard who had charge of it.

on the pretensions of Cortés; but, whether from a conviction that the latter had been wronged, or from personal preference, he afterwards attached himself zealously to his leader's interests. The general requited this with a generous confidence, assigning him, as we have seen, a separate and independent command, where misconduct, or even a mistake, would have been fatal to the expedition. Velasquez proved himself worthy of the trust; and there was no cavalier in the army, with the exception, perhaps, of Sandoval and Alvarado, whose loss would have been so deeply deplored by the commander. Such were the disastrous results of this terrible passage of the causeway; more disastrous than those occasioned by any other reverse which has stained the Spanish arms in the New World; and which have branded the night on which it happened, in the national annals, with the name of the *noche triste*, "the sad or melancholy night." ³⁰

³⁰ Gomara, Crónica, cap. 109.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

CHAPTER IV

RETREAT OF THE SPANIARDS—DISTRESSES OF THE
ARMY — PYRAMIDS OF TEOTIHUACAN — GREAT
BATTLE OF OTUMBA

1520

THE Mexicans, during the day which followed the retreat of the Spaniards, remained, for the most part, quiet in their own capital, where they found occupation in cleansing the streets and causeways from the dead, which lay festering in heaps that might have bred a pestilence. They may have been employed, also, in paying the last honors to such of their warriors as had fallen, solemnizing the funeral rites by the sacrifice of their wretched prisoners, who, as they contemplated their own destiny, may well have envied the fate of their companions who left their bones on the battle-field. It was most fortunate for the Spaniards, in their extremity, that they had this breathing-time allowed them by the enemy. But Cortés knew that he could not calculate on its continuance, and, feeling how important it was to get the start of his vigilant foe, he ordered his troops to be in readiness to resume their march by midnight. Fires were left burning, the better to deceive the enemy; and at the appointed hour the little army,

without sound of drum or trumpet, but with renewed spirits, sallied forth from the gates of the *teocalli*, within whose hospitable walls they had found such seasonable succor. The place is now indicated by a Christian church, dedicated to the Virgin, under the title of *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*, whose miraculous image—the very same, *it is said*, brought over by the followers of Cortés¹—still extends her beneficent sway over the neighboring capital; and the traveller who pauses within the precincts of the consecrated fane may feel that he is standing on the spot made memorable by the refuge it afforded to the Conquerors in the hour of their deepest despondency.²

It was arranged that the sick and wounded should occupy the centre, transported on litters, or on the backs of the *tamanes*, while those who were strong enough to keep their seats should mount behind the cavalry. The able-bodied soldiers were ordered to the front and rear, while others protected the flanks, thus affording all the security possible to the invalids.

The retreating army held on its way unmolested under cover of the darkness. But, as morning dawned, they beheld parties of the natives moving over the heights, or hanging at a distance, like a

¹ Lorenzana, *Viage*, p. xiii.

² The last instance, I believe, of the direct interposition of the Virgin in behalf of the metropolis was in 1833, when she was brought into the city to avert the cholera. She refused to pass the night in town, however, but was found the next morning in her own sanctuary at Los Remedios, showing, by the mud with which she was plentifully bespattered, that she must have performed the distance—several leagues—through the miry ways on foot! See Latrobe, *Rambler in Mexico*, Letter 5.

cloud of locusts, on their rear. They did not belong to the capital, but were gathered from the neighboring country, where the tidings of their rout had already penetrated. The charm which had hitherto covered the white men was gone. The dread *Teules* were no longer invincible.³

The Spaniards, under the conduct of their Tlascalan guides, took a circuitous route to the north, passing through Quauhtitlan, and round lake Tzompanco (Zumpango), thus lengthening their march, but keeping at a distance from the capital. From the eminences, as they passed along, the Indians rolled down heavy stones, mingled with volleys of darts and arrows, on the heads of the soldiers. Some were even bold enough to descend into the plain and assault the extremities of the column. But they were soon beaten off by the horse, and compelled to take refuge among the hills, where the ground was too rough for the rider to follow. Indeed, the Spaniards did not care to do so, their object being rather to fly than to fight.

In this way they slowly advanced, halting at intervals to drive off their assailants when they be-

³ The epithet by which, according to Diaz, the Castilians were constantly addressed by the natives, and which—whether correctly or not—he interprets into *gods*, or *divine beings*. (See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 48, et alibi.) One of the stanzas of Ercilla intimates the existence of a similar delusion among the South American Indians,—and a similar cure of it:

“Por dioses, como dixe, eran tenidos
de los Indios los nuestros; pero oliéron
que de muger y hombre eran nacidos,
y todas sus flaquezas entendieron:
viéndolos á miserias sometidos,
el error ignorante conociéron,
ardiendo en viva rabia avergonzados
por verse de mortales conquistados.”

LA ARAUCANA, Parte 1, Canto 2.

came too importunate, and greatly distressed by their missiles and their desultory attacks. At night, the troops usually found shelter in some town or hamlet, whence the inhabitants, in anticipation of their approach, had been careful to carry off all the provisions. The Spaniards were soon reduced to the greatest straits for subsistence. Their principal food was the wild cherry, which grew in the woods or by the roadside. Fortunate were they if they found a few ears of corn unplucked. More frequently nothing was left but the stalks; and with them, and the like unwholesome fare, they were fain to supply the cravings of appetite. When a horse happened to be killed, it furnished an extraordinary banquet; and Cortés himself records the fact of his having made one of a party who thus sumptuously regaled themselves, devouring the animal even to his hide.⁴

The wretched soldiers, faint with famine and fatigue, were sometimes seen to drop down lifeless on the road. Others loitered behind, unable to keep up with the march, and fell into the hands of the enemy, who followed in the track of the army like

⁴ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 147.—Hunger furnished them a sauce, says Oviedo, which made their horse-flesh as relishing as the far-famed sausages of Naples, the delicate kid of Avila, or the savory veal of Saragossa! “Con la carne del caballo tubieron buen pasto, é se consoláron ó mitigáron en parte su hambre, é se lo comiéron sin dexar cuero, ni otra cosa dél sino los huesos, é las vñas, y el pelo; é aun las tripas no les pareció de menos buen gusto que las sobreasados de Nápoles, ó los gentiles cabritos de Abila, ó las sabrosas Terneras de Zaragoza, segun la extrema necesidad que llevaban; por que despues que de la gran cibdad de Temixtitan havian salido, ninguna otra cosa comiéron sino mahiz tostado, é cocido, é yervas del campo, y desto no tanto quanto quisieran ó ovieran menester.” Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13.

a flock of famished vultures, eager to pounce on the dying and the dead. Others, again, who strayed too far, in their eagerness to procure sustenance, shared the same fate. The number of these, at length, and the consciousness of the cruel lot for which they were reserved, compelled Cortés to introduce stricter discipline, and to enforce it by sterner punishments than he had hitherto done,—though too often ineffectually, such was the indifference to danger, under the overwhelming pressure of present calamity.

In their prolonged distresses, the soldiers ceased to set a value on those very things for which they had once been content to hazard life itself. More than one who had brought his golden treasure safe through the perils of the *noche triste* now abandoned it as an intolerable burden; and the rude Indian peasant gleaned up, with wondering delight, the bright fragments of the spoils of the capital.⁵

Through these weary days Cortés displayed his usual serenity and fortitude. He was ever in the post of danger, freely exposing himself in encounters with the enemy; in one of which he received a severe wound in the head that afterwards gave him much trouble.⁶ He fared no better than the humblest soldier, and strove, by his own cheerful countenance and counsels, to fortify the courage of those who faltered, assuring them that their suffer-

⁵ Herrera mentions one soldier who had succeeded in carrying off his gold to the value of 3000 *castellanos* across the causeway, and afterwards flung it away by the advice of Cortés. "The devil take your gold," said the commander bluntly to him, "if it is to cost you your life." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 11.

⁶ Gomara, Crónica, cap. 110.

ings would soon be ended by their arrival in the hospitable "land of bread."⁷ His faithful officers co-operated with him in these efforts; and the common file, indeed, especially his own veterans, must be allowed, for the most part, to have shown a full measure of the constancy and power of endurance so characteristic of their nation,—justifying the honest boast of an old chronicler, "that there was no people so capable of supporting hunger as the Spaniards, and none of them who were ever more severely tried than the soldiers of Cortés."⁸ A similar fortitude was shown by the Tlascalans, trained in a rough school that made them familiar with hardship and privations. Although they sometimes threw themselves on the ground, in the extremity of famine, imploring their gods not to abandon them, they did their duty as warriors, and, far from manifesting coldness towards the Spaniards as the cause of their distresses, seemed only the more firmly knit to them by the sense of a common suffering.

On the seventh morning, the army had reached the mountain rampart which overlooks the plains of Otompan, or Otumba, as commonly called, from the Indian city—now a village—situated in them. The distance from the capital is hardly nine leagues. But the Spaniards had travelled more than thrice that distance, in their circuitous march round the lakes. This had been performed so

⁷ The meaning of the word *Tlascala*, and so called from the abundance of maize raised in the country. Boturini, *Idea*, p. 78.

⁸ "Empero la Nacion nuestra Española sufre mas hambre que otra ninguna, i estos de Cortés mas que todos." Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 110.

slowly that it consumed a week, two nights of which had been passed in the same quarters, from the absolute necessity of rest. It was not, therefore, till the seventh of July that they reached the heights commanding the plains which stretched far away towards the territory of Tlascalala, in full view of the venerable pyramids of Teotihuacan, two of the most remarkable monuments of the antique American civilization now existing north of the Isthmus. During all the preceding day they had seen parties of the enemy hovering like dark clouds above the highlands, brandishing their weapons, and calling out, in vindictive tones, "Hasten on! You will soon find yourselves where you cannot escape!" words of mysterious import, which they were made fully to comprehend on the following morning.⁹

The monuments of San Juan Teotihuacan are, with the exception of the temple of Cholula, the most ancient remains, probably, on the Mexican soil. They were found by the Aztecs, according to their traditions, on their entrance into the country, when Teotihuacan, *the habitation of the gods*, now a paltry village, was a flourishing city, the rival of Tula, the great Toltec capital.¹⁰ The two princi-

⁹ For the foregoing pages, see Camargo, Hist. de Tlascalala, MS.,—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 13,—Gomara, Crónica, ubi supra,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 89,—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 6,—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 147, 148,—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 25, 26.

¹⁰ "Su nombre, que quiere decir *habitacion de los Dioses*, y que ya por estos tiempos era ciudad tan famosa, que no solo competia, pero excedia con muchas ventajas á la corte de Tollan." Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 27.

pal pyramids were dedicated to *Tonatiuh*, the Sun, and *Meztli*, the Moon. The former, which is considerably the larger, is found by recent measurements to be six hundred and eighty-two feet long at the base, and one hundred and eighty feet high, dimensions not inferior to those of some of the kindred monuments of Egypt.¹¹ They were divided into four stories, of which three are now discernible, while the vestiges of the intermediate gradations are nearly effaced. In fact, time has dealt so roughly with them, and the materials have been so much displaced by the treacherous vegetation of the tropics, muffling up with its flowery mantle the ruin which it causes, that it is not easy to discern at once the pyramidal form of the structures.¹² The huge masses bear such resemblance to the North American mounds that some have fancied them to be only natural eminences shaped by the hand of man into a regular form, and ornamented with the temples and terraces the wreck of which still covers their slopes. But others, seeing no example of a similar elevation in the wide plain in which they stand, infer, with more prob-

¹¹ The pyramid of Mycerinos is 280 feet only at the base, and 162 feet in height. The great pyramid of Cheops is 728 feet at the base, and 448 feet high. See Denon, *Egypt Illustrated* (London, 1825), p. 9.

¹² "It requires a particular position," says Mr. Tudor, "united with some little faith, to discover the pyramidal form at all." (*Tour in North America*, vol. ii. p. 277.) Yet Mr. Bullock says, "The general figure of the square is as perfect as the great pyramid of Egypt." (*Six Months in Mexico*, vol. ii. chap. 26.) Eye-witnesses both! The historian must often content himself with repeating, in the words of the old French lay,—

*"Si com je l'ai trouvé écrite,
Vos conterai la vérité."*

ability, that they are wholly of an artificial construction.¹³

The interior is composed of clay mixed with pebbles, incrusting on the surface with the light porous stone, *tetzontli*, so abundant in the neighboring quarries. Over this was a thick coating of stucco, resembling, in its reddish color, that found in the ruins of Palenque. According to tradition, the pyramids are hollow; but hitherto the attempt to discover the cavity in that dedicated to the Sun has been unsuccessful. In the smaller mound an aperture has been found on the southern side, at two-thirds of the elevation. It is formed by a narrow gallery, which, after penetrating to the distance of several yards, terminates in two pits or wells. The largest of these is about fifteen feet deep,¹⁴ and the sides are faced with unbaked bricks; but to what purpose it was devoted, nothing is left to show. It may have been to hold the ashes of some powerful chief, like the solitary apartment discovered in the great Egyptian pyramid. That these monuments were dedicated to religious uses, there is no doubt; and it would be only conformable to the practice of antiquity in the Eastern continent that they should have served for tombs as well as temples.¹⁵

¹³ This is M. de Humboldt's opinion. (See his *Essai politique*, tom. ii. pp. 66-70.) He has also discussed these interesting monuments in his *Vues des Cordillères*, p. 25, et seq.

¹⁴ Latrobe gives the description of this cavity, into which he and his fellow travellers penetrated. Rambler in Mexico, Letter 7.

¹⁵ "Et tot templa deum Romæ, quot in urbe sepulera
Heroum numerare lieet: quos fabula manes
Nobilitat, noster populus veneratus adorat."

PRUDENTIUS, *Contra Sym.*, lib. 1.

Distinct traces of the latter destination are said to be visible on the summit of the smaller pyramid, consisting of the remains of stone walls showing a building of considerable size and strength.¹⁶ There are no remains on the top of the pyramid of the Sun. But the traveller who will take the trouble to ascend its bald summit will be amply compensated by the glorious view it will open to him;—towards the southeast, the hills of Tlascala, surrounded by their green plantations and cultivated corn-fields, in the midst of which stands the little village, once the proud capital of the republic. Somewhat farther to the south, the eye passes across the beautiful plains lying around the city of Puebla de los Angeles, founded by the old Spaniards, and still rivalling, in the splendor of its churches, the most brilliant capitals of Europe; and far in the west he may behold the Valley of Mexico, spread out like a map, with its diminished lakes, its princely capital rising in still greater glory from its ruins, and its rugged hills gathering darkly around it, as in the days of Montezuma.

The summit of this larger mound is said to have been crowned by a temple, in which was a colossal statue of its presiding deity, the Sun, made of one entire block of stone, and facing the east. Its breast was protected by a plate of burnished gold and silver, on which the first rays of the rising luminary rested.¹⁷ An antiquary, in the early part

¹⁶ The dimensions are given by Bullock (*Six Months in Mexico*, vol. ii. chap. 26), who has sometimes seen what has eluded the optics of other travellers.

¹⁷ Such is the account given by the cavalier Boturini. *Idea*, pp. 42, 43.

of the last century, speaks of having seen some fragments of the statue. It was still standing, according to report, on the invasion of the Spaniards, and was demolished by the indefatigable Bishop Zumárraga, whose hand fell more heavily than that of Time itself on the Aztec monuments.¹⁸

Around the principal pyramids are a great number of smaller ones, rarely exceeding thirty feet in height, which, according to tradition, were dedicated to the stars and served as sepulchres for the great men of the nation. They are arranged symmetrically in avenues terminating at the sides of the great pyramids, which face the cardinal points. The plain on which they stand was called *Micoatl*, or "Path of the Dead." The laborer, as he turns up the ground, still finds there numerous arrowheads, and blades of obsidian, attesting the warlike character of its primitive population.¹⁹

What thoughts must crowd on the mind of the traveller as he wanders amidst these memorials of the past; as he treads over the ashes of the generations who reared these colossal fabrics, which take us from the present into the very depths of time! But who were their builders? Was it the shadowy Olmecs, whose history, like that of the ancient Titans, is lost in the mists of fable? or, as commonly reported, the peaceful and industrious Toltecs, of

¹⁸ Both Ixtlilxochitl and Boturini, who visited these monuments, one early in the seventeenth, the other in the first part of the eighteenth century, testify to their having seen the remains of this statue. They had entirely disappeared by 1757, when Veytia examined the pyramid. Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 26.

¹⁹ "Agricola, incurvo terram molitus aratro.
Exesa inveniet scabra rubigine pila," etc.

GEORG., lib. i.

whom all that we can glean rests on traditions hardly more secure? What has become of the races who built them? Did they remain on the soil, and mingle and become incorporated with the fierce Aztecs who succeeded them? Or did they pass on to the South, and find a wider field for the expansion of their civilization, as shown by the higher character of the architectural remains in the distant regions of Central America and Yucatan? It is all a mystery,—over which time has thrown an impenetrable veil, that no mortal hand may raise. A nation has passed away,—powerful, populous, and well advanced in refinement, as attested by their monuments,—but it has perished without a name. It has died and made no sign!

Such speculations, however, do not seem to have disturbed the minds of the Conquerors, who have not left a single line respecting these time-honored structures, though they passed in full view of them,—perhaps under their very shadows. In the sufferings of the present they had little leisure to bestow on the past. Indeed, the new and perilous position in which at this very spot they found themselves must naturally have excluded every other thought from their bosoms but that of self-preservation.

As the army was climbing the mountain steeps which shut in the Valley of Otompan, the vedettes came in with the intelligence that a powerful body was encamped on the other side, apparently awaiting their approach. The intelligence was soon confirmed by their own eyes as they turned the crest of the sierra, and saw spread out, below, a mighty

host, filling up the whole depth of the valley, and giving to it the appearance, from the white cotton mail of the warriors, of being covered with snow.²⁰ It consisted of levies from the surrounding country, and especially the populous territory of Tezcucuo, drawn together at the instance of Cuitlahua, Montezuma's successor, and now concentrated on this point to dispute the passage of the Spaniards. Every chief of note had taken the field with his whole array gathered under his standard, proudly displaying all the pomp and rude splendor of his military equipment. As far as the eye could reach, were to be seen shields and waving banners, fantastic helmets, forests of shining spears, the bright feather-mail of the chief, and the coarse cotton panoply of his follower, all mingled together in wild confusion and tossing to and fro like the billows of a troubled ocean.²¹ It was a sight to fill the stoutest heart among the Christians with dismay, heightened by the previous expectation of soon reaching the friendly land which was to terminate their wearisome pilgrimage. Even Cortés, as he contrasted the tremendous array before him with his own diminished squadrons, wasted by disease and enfeebled by hunger and fatigue, could not escape the conviction that his last hour had arrived.²²

²⁰ "Y como iban vestidos de blanco, parecia el campo nevado," Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.

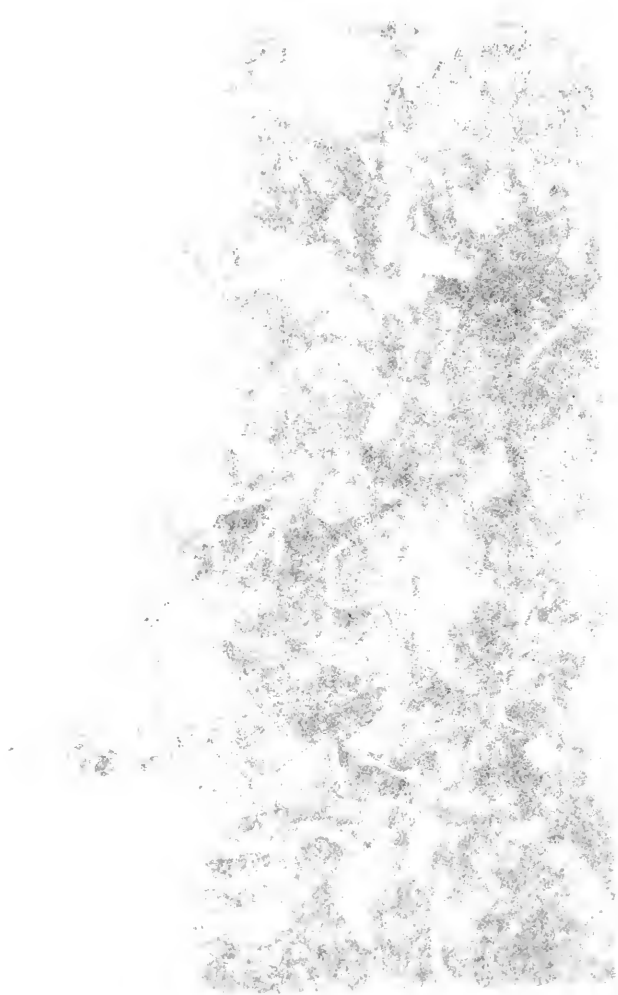
²¹ "Vistosa confusion," says Solís, "de armas y penachos, en que tenían su hermosura los horrores." (*Conquista*, lib. 4, cap. 20.) His painting shows the hand of a great artist,—which he certainly was. But he should not have put fire-arms into the hands of his countrymen on this occasion.

²² "Y cierto creímos ser aquel el último de nuestros días." *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 148.

But his was not the heart to despond; and he gathered strength from the very extremity of his situation. He had no room for hesitation; for there was no alternative left to him. To escape was impossible. He could not retreat on the capital, from which he had been expelled. He must advance,—cut through the enemy, or perish. He hastily made his dispositions for the fight. He gave his force as broad a front as possible, protecting it on each flank by his little body of horse, now reduced to twenty. Fortunately, he had not allowed the invalids, for the last two days, to mount behind the riders, from a desire to spare the horses, so that these were now in tolerable condition; and, indeed, the whole army had been refreshed by halting, as we have seen, two nights and a day in the same place, a delay, however, which had allowed the enemy time to assemble in such force to dispute its progress.

Cortés instructed his cavaliers not to part with their lances, and to direct them at the face. The infantry were to thrust, not strike, with their swords; passing them at once through the bodies of their enemies. They were, above all, to aim at the leaders, as the general well knew how much depends on the life of the commander in the wars of barbarians, whose want of subordination makes them impatient of any control but that to which they are accustomed.

He then addressed to his troops a few words of encouragement, as customary with him on the eve of an engagement. He reminded them of the victories they had won with odds nearly as discour-





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aging as the present; thus establishing the superiority of science and discipline over numbers. Numbers, indeed, were of no account, where the arm of the Almighty was on their side. And he bade them have full confidence that He who had carried them safely through so many perils would not now abandon them and his own good cause to perish by the hand of the infidel. His address was brief, for he read in their looks that settled resolve which rendered words unnecessary. The circumstances of their position spoke more forcibly to the heart of every soldier than any eloquence could have done, filling it with that feeling of desperation which makes the weak arm strong and turns the coward into a hero. After they had earnestly commended themselves, therefore, to the protection of God, the Virgin, and St. James, Cortés led his battalions straight against the enemy.²³

It was a solemn moment, that in which the devoted little band, with steadfast countenances and their usual intrepid step, descended on the plain, to be swallowed up, as it were, in the vast ocean of their enemies. The latter rushed on with impetuosity to meet them, making the mountains ring to their discordant yells and battle-cries, and sending forth volleys of stones and arrows which for a moment shut out the light of day. But, when the

²³ Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 14.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 128.—Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27.—Cortés might have addressed his troops, as Napoleon did his in the famous battle with the Mamelukes: "From yonder pyramids forty centuries look down upon you." But the situation of the Spaniards was altogether too serious for theatrical display.

leading files of the two armies closed, the superiority of the Christians was felt, as their antagonists, falling back before the charges of cavalry, were thrown into confusion by their own numbers who pressed on them from behind. The Spanish infantry followed up the blow, and a wide lane was opened in the ranks of the enemy, who, receding on all sides, seemed willing to allow a free passage for their opponents. But it was to return on them with accumulated force, as rallying they poured upon the Christians, enveloping the little army on all sides, which, with its bristling array of long swords and javelins, stood firm,—in the words of a contemporary,—like an islet against which the breakers, roaring and surging, spend their fury in vain.²⁴ The struggle was desperate of man against man. The Tlascalan seemed to renew his strength, as he fought almost in view of his own native hills, as did the Spaniard, with the horrible doom of the captive before his eyes. Well did the cavaliers do their duty on that day; charging, in little bodies of four or five abreast, deep into the enemy's ranks, riding over the broken files, and by this temporary advantage giving strength and courage to the infantry. Not a lance was there which did not reek with the blood of the infidel. Among the rest, the young captain Sandoval is particularly commemorated for his daring prowess. Managing his fiery steed with easy horsemanship, he darted, when least

²⁴ It is Sahagun's simile: "Estaban los Españoles como una Isleta en el mar, combatida de las olas por todas partes." (Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27.) The venerable missionary gathered the particulars of the action, as he informs us, from several who were present in it.

expected, into the thickest of the *mêlée*, overturning the stanchest warriors, and rejoicing in danger, as if it were his natural element.²⁵

But these gallant displays of heroism served only to engulf the Spaniards deeper and deeper in the mass of the enemy, with scarcely any more chance of cutting their way through his dense and interminable battalions than of hewing a passage with their swords through the mountains. Many of the Tlascalans and some of the Spaniards had fallen, and not one but had been wounded. Cortés himself had received a second cut on the head, and his horse was so much injured that he was compelled to dismount, and take one from the baggage train, a strong-boned animal, who carried him well through the turmoil of the day.²⁶ The contest had now lasted several hours. The sun rode high in the heavens, and shed an intolerable fervor over the plain. The Christians, weakened by previous sufferings, and faint with loss of blood, began to relax in their desperate exertions. Their enemies, constantly supported by fresh relays from the rear, were still in good heart, and, quick to perceive their

²⁵ The epic bard Ercilla's spirited portrait of the young warrior Tucapél may be applied without violence to Sandoval, as described by the Castilian chroniclers:

"Cubierto Tucapél de fina malla
saltó como un ligero y suelto pardo
en medio de la tímida canalla,
haciendo plaza el bárbaro gallardo:
con silvos grita en desigual batalla:
con piedra, palo, flecha, lanza y dardo
le persigue la gente de manera
como si fuera toro, ó brava fiera."

LA ARAUCANA, Parte 1, canto 8.

²⁶ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—"Este caballo harriero," says Camargo, "le sirvió en la conquista de Méjico, y en la última guerra que se dió se le matáron." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

advantage, pressed with redoubled force on the Spaniards. The horse fell back, crowded on the foot; and the latter, in vain seeking a passage amidst the dusky throngs of the enemy, who now closed up the rear, were thrown into some disorder. The tide of battle was setting rapidly against the Christians. The fate of the day would soon be decided; and all that now remained for them seemed to be to sell their lives as dearly as possible.

At this critical moment, Cortés, whose restless eye had been roving round the field in quest of any object that might offer him the means of arresting the coming ruin, rising in his stirrups, descried at a distance, in the midst of the throng, the chief who from his dress and military cortége he knew must be the commander of the barbarian forces. He was covered with a rich surcoat of feather-work; and a panache of beautiful plumes, gorgeously set in gold and precious stones, floated above his head. Rising above this, and attached to his back, between the shoulders, was a short staff bearing a golden net for a banner,—the singular, but customary, symbol of authority for an Aztec commander. The cacique, whose name was Cihuaca, was borne on a litter, and a body of young warriors, whose gay and ornamented dresses showed them to be the flower of the Indian nobles, stood round as a guard of his person and the sacred emblem.

The eagle eye of Cortés no sooner fell on this personage than it lighted up with triumph. Turning quickly round to the cavaliers at his side, among whom were Sandoval, Olid, Alvarado, and Avila,

he pointed out the chief, exclaiming, "There is our mark! Follow and support me!" Then, crying his war-cry, and striking his iron heel into his weary steed, he plunged headlong into the thickest of the press. His enemies fell back, taken by surprise and daunted by the ferocity of the attack. Those who did not were pierced through with his lance or borne down by the weight of his charger. The cavaliers followed close in the rear. On they swept with the fury of a thunderbolt, cleaving the solid ranks asunder, strewing their path with the dying and the dead, and bounding over every obstacle in their way. In a few minutes they were in the presence of the Indian commander, and Cortés, overturning his supporters, sprang forward with the strength of a lion, and, striking him through with his lance, hurled him to the ground. A young cavalier, Juan de Salamanca, who had kept close by his general's side, quickly dismounted and despatched the fallen chief. Then, tearing away his banner, he presented it to Cortés, as a trophy to which he had the best claim.²⁷ It was all the work of a moment. The guard, overpowered by the suddenness of the onset, made little resistance, but, flying, communicated their own panic to their comrades. The tidings of the loss soon spread over the field. The Indians, filled with consternation, now thought only of escape. In their blind terror, their numbers augmented their confusion. They

²⁷ The brave cavalier was afterwards permitted by the emperor Charles V. to assume this trophy on his own escutcheon, in commemoration of his exploit. Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 128.

trampled on one another, fancying it was the enemy in their rear.²⁸

The Spaniards and Tlascalans were not slow to avail themselves of the marvellous change in their affairs. Their fatigue, their wounds, hunger, thirst, all were forgotten in the eagerness for vengeance; and they followed up the flying foe, dealing death at every stroke, and taking ample retribution for all they had suffered in the bloody marshes of Mexico.²⁹ Long did they pursue, till, the enemy having abandoned the field, they returned, sated with slaughter, to glean the booty which he had left. It was great, for the ground was covered with the bodies of chiefs, at whom the Spaniards, in obedience to the general's instructions, had particularly aimed; and their dresses displayed all the barbaric pomp of ornament in which the Indian warrior delighted.³⁰ When his men had

²⁸ The historians all concur in celebrating this glorious achievement of Cortés; who, concludes Gomara, "by his single arm saved the whole army from destruction." See *Crónica*, cap. 110.—Also Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27.—Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 128.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—*Ixtlilxochitl*, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 89.—The brief and extremely modest notice of the affair in the general's own letter forms a beautiful contrast to the style of panegyric by others: "In this arduous contest we consumed a great part of the day, until it pleased God that a person was slain in their ranks of such consequence that his death put an end to the battle." *Rel. Seg.*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 148.

²⁹ "Pues á nosotros," says the doughty Captain Diaz, "no nos dolian las heridas, ni teniamos hambre, ni sed, sino que parecia que no auíamos auido, ni passado ningun mal trabajo. Seguimos la vitoria matando, é hiriendo. Pues nuestros amigos los de Tlascala estaban hechos vnos leones, y con sus espadas, y montantes, y otras armas que allí apañáron, hazíanlo muy biẽ y esforçadamente." *Hist. de la Conquista*, loc. cit.

³⁰ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.

thus indemnified themselves, in some degree, for their late reverses, Cortés called them again under their banners; and, after offering up a grateful acknowledgment to the Lord of Hosts for their miraculous preservation,³¹ they renewed their march across the now deserted valley. The sun was declining in the heavens, but, before the shades of evening had gathered around, they reached an Indian temple on an eminence, which afforded a strong and commodious position for the night.

Such was the famous battle of Otompan,—or Otumba, as commonly called, from the Spanish corruption of the name. It was fought on the eighth of July, 1520. The whole amount of the Indian force is reckoned by Castilian writers at two hundred thousand! that of the slain at twenty thousand! Those who admit the first part of the estimate will find no difficulty in receiving the last.³² It is about as difficult to form an accurate calculation of the numbers of a disorderly savage multitude as of the pebbles on the beach or the scattered leaves in autumn. Yet it was, undoubtedly, one of the most remarkable victories ever achieved

³¹ The belligerent apostle St. James, riding, as usual, his milk-white courser, came to the rescue on this occasion; an event commemorated by the dedication of a hermitage to him, in the neighborhood. (Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*.) Diaz, a skeptic on former occasions, admits his indubitable appearance on this. (*Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.) According to the Tezcucan chronicler, he was supported by the Virgin and St. Peter. (*Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 89.) Voltaire sensibly remarks, “Ceux qui ont fait les relations de ces étranges événemens les ont voulu relever par des miracles, qui ne servent en effet qu’à les rabaisser. Le vrai miracle fut la conduite de Cortés.” Voltaire, *Essai sur les Mœurs*, chap. 147.

³² See Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 110.

in the New World. And this, not merely on account of the disparity of the forces, but of their unequal condition. For the Indians were in all their strength, while the Christians were wasted by disease, famine, and long-protracted sufferings; without cannon or fire-arms, and deficient in the military apparatus which had so often struck terror into their barbarian foe,—deficient even in the terrors of a victorious name. But they had discipline on their side, desperate resolve, and implicit confidence in their commander. That they should have triumphed against such odds furnishes an inference of the same kind as that established by the victories of the European over the semi-civilized hordes of Asia.

Yet even here all must not be referred to superior discipline and tactics. For the battle would certainly have been lost had it not been for the fortunate death of the Indian general. And, although the selection of the victim may be called the result of calculation, yet it was by the most precarious chance that he was thrown in the way of the Spaniards. It is, indeed, one among many examples of the influence of fortune in determining the fate of military operations. The star of Cortés was in the ascendant. Had it been otherwise, not a Spaniard would have survived that day to tell the bloody tale of the battle of Otumba.

CHAPTER V

ARRIVAL IN TLASCALA—FRIENDLY RECEPTION—DIS-
CONTENTS OF THE ARMY—JEALOUSY OF THE
TLASCALANS—EMBASSY FROM MEXICO

1520

ON the following morning the army broke up its encampment at an early hour. The enemy does not seem to have made an attempt to rally. Clouds of skirmishers, however, were seen during the morning, keeping at a respectful distance, though occasionally venturing near enough to salute the Spaniards with a volley of missiles.

On a rising ground they discovered a fountain, a blessing not too often met with in these arid regions, and gratefully commemorated by the Christians for the refreshment it afforded by its cool and abundant waters.¹ A little farther on they descried the rude works which served as the bulwark

¹ Is it not the same fountain of which Toribio makes honorable mention in his topographical account of the country? "Nace en Tlaxcala una fuente grande á la parte del Norte, cinco leguas de la principal ciudad; nace en un pueblo que se llama Azumba, que en su lengua quiere decir *cabeza*, y así es, porque esta fuente es cabeza y principio del mayor rio de los que entran en la mar del Sur, el cual entra en la mar por Zacatula." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 16.

and boundary of the Tlascalan territory. At the sight, the allies sent up a joyous shout of congratulation, in which the Spaniards heartily joined, as they felt they were soon to be on friendly and hospitable ground.

But these feelings were speedily followed by others of a different nature; and, as they drew nearer the territory, their minds were disturbed with the most painful apprehensions as to their reception by the people among whom they were bringing desolation and mourning, and who might so easily, if ill disposed, take advantage of their present crippled condition. "Thoughts like these," says Cortés, "weighed as heavily on my spirit as any which I ever experienced in going to battle with the Aztecs."² Still he put, as usual, a good face on the matter, and encouraged his men to confide in their allies, whose past conduct had afforded every ground for trusting to their fidelity in future. He cautioned them, however, as their own strength was so much impaired, to be most careful to give no umbrage or ground for jealousy to their high-spirited allies. "Be but on your guard," continued the intrepid general, "and we have still stout hearts and strong hands to carry us through the midst of them!"³ With these anxious surmises, bidding adieu to the Aztec domain, the

² "El qual pensamiento, y sospecha nos puso en tanta afliccion, quanta trahiamos viniendo peleando con los de Culúa." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 149.

³ "Y mas dixo, que tenia esperança en Dios que los hallariamos buenos, y leales: é que si otra cosa fuesse, lo que Dios no permita, que nos han de tornar á andar los puños con coraçones fuertes, y braços vigorosos, y que para esso fuessemos muy apercebidos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 128.

Christian army crossed the frontier, and once more trod the soil of the Republic.

The first place at which they halted was the town of Huejotlipan, a place of about twelve or fifteen thousand inhabitants.⁴ They were kindly greeted by the people, who came out to receive them, inviting the troops to their habitations, and administering all the relief of their simple hospitality. Yet this was not so disinterested, according to some of the Spaniards, as to prevent their expecting in requital a share of the plunder taken in the late action.⁵ Here the weary forces remained two or three days, when, the news of their arrival having reached the capital, not more than four or five leagues distant, the old chief Maxixca, their efficient friend on their former visit, and Xicotencatl, the young warrior who, it will be remembered, had commanded the troops of his nation in their bloody encounters with the Spaniards, came with a numerous concourse of the citizens to welcome the fugitives to Tlascala. Maxixca, cordially embracing the Spanish commander, testified the deepest sympathy for his misfortunes. That the white men could so long have withstood the confederated power of the Aztecs was proof enough of their marvellous prowess. "We have made common cause together," said the lord of Tlascala, "and we have common injuries to avenge; and, come

⁴ Called Gualipan by Cortés. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 149.) An Aztec would have found it hard to trace the route of his enemies by their itineraries.

⁵ Ibid., *ubi supra*.—Thoan Cano, however, one of the army, denies this, and asserts that the natives received them like their children, and would take no recompense. (See Appendix, No. 11.)

weal or come woe, be assured we will prove true and loyal friends and stand by you to the death.”⁶

This cordial assurance and sympathy, from one who exercised a control over the public counsels beyond any other ruler, effectually dispelled the doubts that lingered in the mind of Cortés. He readily accepted his invitation to continue his march at once to the capital, where he would find so much better accommodations for his army than in a small town on the frontier. The sick and wounded, placed in hammocks, were borne on the shoulders of the friendly natives; and, as the troops drew near the city, the inhabitants came flocking out in crowds to meet them, rending the air with joyous acclamations and wild bursts of their rude Indian minstrelsy. Amidst the general jubilee, however, were heard sounds of wailing and sad lament, as some unhappy relative or friend, looking earnestly into the diminished files of their countrymen, sought in vain for some dear and familiar countenance, and, as they turned disappointed away, gave utterance to their sorrow in tones that touched the heart of every soldier in the army. With these mingled accompaniments of joy and woe,—the motley web of human life,—the way-worn columns of Cortés at length re-entered the republican capital.⁷

* “Y que tubiesse por cierto, que me serian muy ciertos, y verdaderos Amigos, hasta la muerte.” Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 150.

⁷ Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—“Sobreviniéron las mugeres Tlascaltecas, y todas puestas de luto y llorando á donde estaban los Españoles, las unas preguntaban por sus maridos, las otras por sus hijos y hermanos, las otras por sus parientes que habian ido con los Españoles, y quedaban todos allá muertos: no es menos, sino que de esto llanto causó gran sentimiento en el corazon del Capitan, y de todos los Españoles, y

The general and his suite were lodged in the rude but spacious palace of Maxixca. The rest of the army took up their quarters in the district over which the Tlascalan lord presided. Here they continued several weeks, until, by the attentions of the hospitable citizens, and such medical treatment as their humble science could supply, the wounds of the soldiers were healed, and they recovered from the debility to which they had been reduced by their long and unparalleled sufferings. Cortés was one of those who suffered severely. He lost the use of two of the fingers of his left hand.⁸ He had received, besides, two injuries on the head; one of which was so much exasperated by his subsequent fatigues and excitement of mind that it assumed an alarming appearance. A part of the bone was obliged to be removed.⁹ A fever ensued, and for several days the hero who had braved danger and death in their most terrible forms lay stretched on his bed, as helpless as an infant. His excellent constitution, however, got the better of disease, and he was at length once more enabled to resume his cus-

él procuró lo mejor que pudo consolarles por medio de sus Intérpretes." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 28.

⁸ "Yo assimismo quedé manco de dos dedos de la mano izquierda" —is Cortés' own expression in his letter to the emperor. (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 152.) Don Thoan Cano, however, whose sympathies—from his Indian alliance, perhaps—seem to have been quite as much with the Aztecs as with his own countrymen, assured Oviedo, who was lamenting the general's loss, that he might spare his regrets, since Cortés had as many fingers on his hand at that hour as when he came from Castile. (See Appendix, No. 11.) May not the word *manco*, in his letter, be rendered by "maimed"?

⁹ "Hiriéron á Cortés con Honda tan mal, que se le pasmó la Cabeça, ó porque no le curáron bien, sacándole Cascos, ó por el demasiado trabajo que pasó." Gomara, Crónica cap. 110.

tomary activity. The Spaniards, with politic generosity, requited the hospitality of their hosts by sharing with them the spoils of their recent victory, and Cortés especially rejoiced the heart of Maxixca by presenting him with the military trophy which he had won from the Indian commander.¹⁰

But while the Spaniards were thus recruiting their health and spirits under the friendly treatment of their allies, and recovering the confidence and tranquillity of mind which had sunk under their hard reverses, they received tidings, from time to time, which showed that their late disaster had not been confined to the Mexican capital. On his descent from Mexico to encounter Narvaez, Cortés had brought with him a quantity of gold, which he left for safe keeping at Tlascala. To this was added a considerable sum collected by the unfortunate Velasquez de Leon in his expedition to the coast, as well as contributions from other sources. From the unquiet state of the capital, the general thought it best, on his return there, still to leave the treasure under the care of a number of invalid soldiers, who, when in marching condition, were to rejoin him in Mexico. A party from Vera Cruz, consisting of five horsemen and forty foot, had since arrived at Tlascala, and, taking charge of the invalids and treasure, undertook to escort them to the capital. He now learned that they had been intercepted on the route and all cut off, with the entire loss of the treasure. Twelve other soldiers, marching in the same direction, had been

¹⁰ Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.—Bernal Diaz *Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.

massacred in the neighboring province of Tepeaca; and accounts continually arrived of some unfortunate Castilian, who, presuming on the respect hitherto shown to his countrymen, and ignorant of the disasters in the capital, had fallen a victim to the fury of the enemy.¹¹

These dismal tidings filled the mind of Cortés with gloomy apprehensions for the fate of the settlement at Villa Rica,—the last stay of their hopes. He despatched a trusty messenger, at once, to that place, and had the inexpressible satisfaction to receive a letter in return from the commander of the garrison, acquainting him with the safety of the colony and its friendly relations with the neighboring Totonacs. It was the best guarantee of the fidelity of the latter, that they had offended the Mexicans too deeply to be forgiven.

While the affairs of Cortés wore so gloomy an aspect without, he had to experience an annoyance scarcely less serious from the discontents of his followers. Many of them had fancied that their late appalling reverses would put an end to the expedition, or, at least, postpone all thoughts of resuming it for the present. But they knew little of Cortés who reasoned thus. Even while tossing on his bed of sickness, he was ripening in his mind fresh schemes for retrieving his honor, and for recover-

¹¹ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 150.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15.—Herrera gives the following inscription, cut on the bark of a tree by some of these unfortunate Spaniards: "By this road passed Juan Juste and his wretched companions, who were so much pinched by hunger that they were obliged to give a solid bar of gold, weighing eight hundred ducats, for a few cakes of maize bread." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 13.

ing the empire which had been lost more by another's rashness than his own. This was apparent, as he became convalescent, from the new regulations he made respecting the army, as well as from the orders sent to Vera Cruz for fresh reinforcements.

The knowledge of all this occasioned much disquietude to the disaffected soldiers. They were, for the most part, the ancient followers of Narvaez, on whom, as we have seen, the brunt of the war had fallen the heaviest. Many of them possessed property in the Islands, and had embarked on this expedition chiefly from the desire of increasing it. But they had gathered neither gold nor glory in Mexico. Their present service filled them only with disgust; and the few, comparatively, who had been so fortunate as to survive, languished to return to their rich mines and pleasant farms in Cuba, bitterly cursing the day when they had left them.

Finding their complaints little heeded by the general, they prepared a written remonstrance, in which they made their demand more formally. They represented the rashness of persisting in the enterprise in his present impoverished state, without arms or ammunition, almost without men; and this, too, against a powerful enemy, who had been more than a match for him with all the strength of his late resources. It was madness to think of it. The attempt would bring them all to the sacrifice-block. Their only course was to continue their march to Vera Cruz. Every hour of delay might be fatal. The garrison in that place might be over-

whelmed from want of strength to defend itself; and thus their last hope would be annihilated. But, once there, they might wait in comparative security for such reinforcements as would join them from abroad; while in case of failure they could the more easily make their escape. They concluded with insisting on being permitted to return at once to the port of Villa Rica. This petition, or rather remonstrance, was signed by all the disaffected soldiers, and, after being formally attested by the royal notary, was presented to Cortés.¹²

It was a trying circumstance for him. What touched him most nearly was to find the name of his friend the secretary Duero, to whose good offices he had chiefly owed his command, at the head of the paper. He was not, however, to be shaken from his purpose for a moment; and, while all outward resources seemed to be fading away, and his own friends faltered, or failed him, he was still true to himself. He knew that to retreat to Vera Cruz would be to abandon the enterprise. Once there, his army would soon find a pretext and a way for breaking up and returning to the Islands. All his ambitious schemes would be blasted. The great prize, already once in his grasp, would then be lost forever. He would be a ruined man.

In his celebrated letter to Charles the Fifth, he says that, in reflecting on his position, he felt the

¹² One is reminded of the similar remonstrance made by Alexander's soldiers to him on reaching the Hystaspis,—but attended with more success; as, indeed, was reasonable. For Alexander continued to advance from the ambition of indefinite conquest; while Cortés was only bent on carrying out his original enterprise. What was madness in the one was heroism in the other.

truth of the old adage, "that fortune favors the brave. The Spaniards were the followers of the Cross; and, trusting in the infinite goodness and mercy of God, he could not believe that He would suffer them and his own good cause thus to perish among the heathen."¹³ He was resolved, therefore, not to descend to the coast, but at all hazards to retrace his steps and beard the enemy again in his capital."

It was in the same resolute tone that he answered his discontented followers.¹⁴ He urged every argument which could touch their pride or honor as cavaliers. He appealed to that ancient Castilian valor which had never been known to falter before an enemy; besought them not to discredit the great deeds which had made their name ring throughout Europe; not to leave the enterprise half achieved, for others more daring and adventurous to finish. How could they with any honor, he asked, desert their allies whom they had involved in the war, and leave them unprotected to the vengeance of the Aztecs? To retreat but a single step towards Villa Rica would be to proclaim their own weakness. It would dishearten their friends and give confidence to their foes. He implored them to resume the con-

¹³ "Acordándome, que siempre á los osados ayuda la fortuna, y que eramos Christianos y confiando en la grandissima Bondad, y Misericordia de Dios, que no permitiria, que del todo pereziessemos, y se perdesse tanta, y tan noble Tierra." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 152.

¹⁴ This reply, exclaims Oviedo, showed a man of unconquerable spirit and high destinies: "Paréceme que la respuesta que á esto les dió Hernando Cortés, é lo que hizo en ello, fué vna cosa de ánimo invencible, é de varon de mucha suerte é valor." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 15.

fidence in him which they had ever showed, and to reflect that, if they had recently met with reverses, he had up to that point accomplished all, and more than all, that he had promised. It would be easy now to retrieve their losses, if they would have patience and abide in this friendly land until the reinforcements, which would be ready to come in at his call, should enable them to act on the offensive. If, however, there were any so insensible to the motives which touch a brave man's heart, as to prefer ease at home to the glory of this great achievement, he would not stand in their way. Let them go, in God's name. Let them leave their general in his extremity. He should feel stronger in the service of a few brave spirits than if surrounded by a host of the false or the faint-hearted.¹⁵

The disaffected party, as already noticed, was chiefly drawn from the troops of Narvaez. When the general's own veterans heard this appeal,¹⁶ their blood warmed with indignation at the thoughts of abandoning him or the cause at such a crisis. They pledged themselves to stand by him to the last; and the malecontents, silenced, if not convinced, by this generous expression of sentiment from their comrades, consented to postpone their departure for the present, under the assurance that

¹⁵ "E no me hable ninguno en otra cosa; y él que desta opinion no estubiere váyase en buen hora, que mas holgaré de quedar con los pocos y osados, que en compañía de muchos, ni de ninguno cobarde, ni desacordado de su propia honra." Hist. de las Ind., MS., loc. cit.

¹⁶ Oviedo has expanded the harangue of Cortés into several pages, in the course of which the orator quotes Xenophon, and borrows largely from the old Jewish history, a style of eloquence savoring much more of the closet than the camp. Cortés was no pedant, and his soldiers were no scholars.

no obstacle would be thrown in their way when a more favorable season should present itself.¹⁷

Scarcely was this difficulty adjusted, when Cortés was menaced with one more serious, in the jealousy springing up between his soldiers and their Indian allies. Notwithstanding the demonstrations of regard by Maxixca and his immediate followers, there were others of the nation who looked with an evil eye on their guests, for the calamities in which they had involved them; and they tauntingly asked if, in addition to this, they were now to be burdened by the presence and maintenance of the strangers. These sallies of discontent were not so secret as altogether to escape the ears of the Spaniards, in whom they occasioned no little disquietude. They proceeded for the most part, it is true, from persons of little consideration, since the four great chiefs of the republic appear to have been steadily secured to the interests of Cortés. But they derived some importance from the countenance of the warlike Xicotencatl, in whose bosom still lingered the embers of that implacable hostility which he had displayed so courageously on the field of battle; and sparkles of this fiery temper occasionally gleamed forth in the intimate intercourse into which he was now reluctantly brought with his ancient opponents.

¹⁷ For the account of this turbulent transaction, see Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 129,—*Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 152,—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 15,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 112, 113,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 14. —Diaz is exceedingly wroth with the chaplain Gomara for not discriminating between the old soldiers and the levies of Narvaez, whom he involves equally in the sin of rebellion. The captain's own version seems a fair one, and I have followed it, therefore, in the text.

Cortés, who saw with alarm the growing feeling of estrangement which must sap the very foundations on which he was to rest the lever for future operations, employed every argument which suggested itself, to restore the confidence of his own men. He reminded them of the good services they had uniformly received from the great body of the nation. They had a sufficient pledge of the future constancy of the Tlascalans in their long-cherished hatred of the Aztecs, which the recent disasters they had suffered from the same quarter could serve only to sharpen. And he urged, with much force, that if any evil designs had been meditated by them against the Spaniards the Tlascalans would, doubtless, have taken advantage of their late disabled condition, and not waited till they had recovered their strength and means of resistance.¹⁸

While Cortés was thus endeavoring, with somewhat doubtful success, to stifle his own apprehensions, as well as those in the bosoms of his followers, an event occurred which happily brought the affair to an issue, and permanently settled the relations in which the two parties were to stand to each other. This will make it necessary to notice some events which had occurred in Mexico since the expulsion of the Spaniards.

On Montezuma's death, his brother, Cuitlahua, lord of Iztapalapan, conformably to the usage regulating the descent of the Aztec crown, was chosen to succeed him. He was an active prince,

¹⁸ Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 15.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 14.—Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29.

of large experience in military affairs, and, by the strength of his character, was well fitted to sustain the tottering fortunes of the monarchy. He appears, moreover, to have been a man of liberal, and what may be called enlightened, taste, to judge from the beautiful gardens which he had filled with rare exotics and which so much attracted the admiration of the Spaniards in his city of Iztapalapan. Unlike his predecessor, he held the white men in detestation, and had, probably, the satisfaction of celebrating his own coronation by the sacrifice of many of them. From the moment of his release from the Spanish quarters, where he had been detained by Cortés, he entered into the patriotic movements of his people. It was he who conducted the assaults both in the streets of the city and on the "Melancholy Night;" and it was at his instigation that the powerful force had been assembled to dispute the passage of the Spaniards in the Vale of Otumba.¹⁹

Since the evacuation of the capital, he had been busily occupied in repairing the mischief it had received,—restoring the buildings and the bridges and putting it in the best posture of defence. He had endeavored to improve the discipline and arms of his troops. He introduced the long spear among them, and, by attaching the sword-blades

¹⁹ Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 47.—*Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 166.—Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 27, 29.—Or, rather, it was "at the instigation of the great Devil, the captain of all the devils, called Satan, who regulated every thing in New Spain by his free will and pleasure, before the coming of the Spaniards," according to Father Sahagun, who begins his chapter with this eloquent exordium.

taken from the Christians to long poles, contrived a weapon that should be formidable against the cavalry. He summoned his vassals, far and near, to hold themselves in readiness to march to the relief of the capital, if necessary, and, the better to secure their good will, relieved them from some of the burdens usually laid on them. But he was now to experience the instability of a government which rested not on love, but on fear. The vassals in the neighborhood of the Valley remained true to their allegiance; but others held themselves aloof, uncertain what course to adopt; while others, again, in the more distant provinces, refused obedience altogether, considering this a favorable moment for throwing off the yoke which had so long galled them.²⁰

In this emergency, the government sent a deputation to its ancient enemies the Tlascalans. It consisted of six Aztec nobles, bearing a present of cotton cloth, salt, and other articles rarely seen, of late years, in the republic. The lords of the state, astonished at this unprecedented act of condescension in their ancient foe, called the council or senate of the great chiefs together, to give the envoys audience.

Before this body the Aztecs stated the purpose of their mission. They invited the Tlascalans to bury all past grievances in oblivion, and to enter into a treaty with them. All the nations of Anahuac should make common cause in defence of

²⁰ Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 88.—Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.

their country against the white men. The Tlascalans would bring down on their own heads the wrath of the gods, if they longer harbored the strangers who had violated and destroyed their temples. If they counted on the support and friendship of their guests, let them take warning from the fate of Mexico, which had received them kindly within its walls, and which, in return, they had filled with blood and ashes. They conjured them, by their reverence for their common religion, not to suffer the white men, disabled as they now were, to escape from their hands, but to sacrifice them at once to the gods, whose temples they had profaned. In that event, they proffered them their alliance, and the renewal of that friendly traffic which would restore to the republic the possession of the comforts and luxuries of which it had been so long deprived.

The proposals of the ambassadors produced different effects on their audience. Xicotencatl was for embracing them at once. Far better was it, he said, to unite with their kindred, with those who held their own language, their faith and usages, than to throw themselves into the arms of the fierce strangers, who, however they might talk of religion, worshipped no god but gold. This opinion was followed by that of the younger warriors, who readily caught the fire of his enthusiasm. But the elder chiefs, especially his blind old father, one of the four rulers of the state, who seem to have been all heartily in the interests of the Spaniards, and one of them, Maxixca, their stanch friend, strongly expressed their aversion to the proposed alliance

with the Aztecs. They were always the same, said the latter,—fair in speech, and false in heart. They now proffered friendship to the Tlascalans. But it was fear which drove them to it, and, when that fear was removed, they would return to their old hostility. Who was it, but these insidious foes, that had so long deprived the country of the very necessities of life, of which they were now so lavish in their offers? Was it not owing to the white men that the nation at length possessed them? Yet they were called on to sacrifice the white men to the gods!—the warriors who, after fighting the battles of the Tlascalans, now threw themselves on their hospitality. But the gods abhorred perfidy. And were not their guests the very beings whose coming had been so long predicted by the oracles? “Let us avail ourselves of it,” he concluded, “and unite and make common cause with them, until we have humbled our haughty enemy.”

This discourse provoked a sharp rejoinder from Xicotencatl, till the passion of the elder chieftain got the better of his patience, and, substituting force for argument, he thrust his younger antagonist, with some violence, from the council-chamber. A preceding so contrary to the usual decorum of Indian debate astonished the assembly. But, far from bringing censure on its author, it effectually silenced opposition. Even the hot-headed followers of Xicotencatl shrunk from supporting a leader who had incurred such a mark of contemptuous displeasure from the ruler whom they most venerated. His own father openly condemned him; and the patriotic young warrior, gifted with a truer

foresight into futurity than his countrymen, was left without support in the council, as he had formerly been on the field of battle. The proffered alliance of the Mexicans was unanimously rejected; and the envoys, fearing that even the sacred character with which they were invested might not protect them from violence, made their escape secretly from the capital.²¹

The result of the conference was of the last importance to the Spaniards, who, in their present crippled condition, especially if taken unawares, would have been, probably, at the mercy of the Tlascalans. At all events, the union of these latter with the Aztecs would have settled the fate of the expedition; since, in the poverty of his own resources, it was only by adroitly playing off one part of the Indian population against the other that Cortés could ultimately hope for success.

²¹ The proceedings in the Tlascalan senate are reported in more or less detail, but substantially alike, by Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.,—Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 12, cap. 14.—See, also, Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 129,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 111.

CHAPTER VI

WAR WITH THE SURROUNDING TRIBES—SUCCESSSES
OF THE SPANIARDS—DEATH OF MAXIXCA—ARRI-
VAL OF REINFORCEMENTS—RETURN IN TRIUMPH
TO TLASCALA

1520

THE Spanish commander, reassured by the result of the deliberations in the Tlascalan senate, now resolved on active operations, as the best means of dissipating the spirit of faction and discontent inevitably fostered by a life of idleness. He proposed to exercise his troops, at first, against some of the neighboring tribes who had laid violent hands on such of the Spaniards as, confiding in their friendly spirit, had passed through their territories. Among these were the Tepeacans, a people often engaged in hostility with the Tlascalans, and who, as mentioned in a preceding chapter, had lately massacred twelve Spaniards in their march to the capital. An expedition against them would receive the ready support of his allies, and would assert the dignity of the Spanish name, much dimmed in the estimation of the natives by the late disasters.

The Tepeacans were a powerful tribe of the same primitive stock as the Aztecs, to whom they acknowledged allegiance. They had transferred

this to the Spaniards, on their first march into the country, intimidated by the bloody defeats of their Tlascalan neighbors. But, since the troubles in the capital, they had again submitted to the Aztec sceptre. Their capital, now a petty village, was a flourishing city at the time of the Conquest, situated in the fruitful plains that stretch far away towards the base of Orizaba.¹ The province contained, moreover, several towns of considerable size, filled with a bold and warlike population.

As these Indians had once acknowledged the authority of Castile, Cortés and his officers regarded their present conduct in the light of rebellion, and, in a council of war, it was decided that those engaged in the late massacre had fairly incurred the doom of slavery.² Before proceeding against them, however, the general sent a summons requiring their submission, and offering full pardon for the past, but, in case of refusal, menacing them with the severest retribution. To this the Indians, now in arms, returned a contemptuous answer, challenging the Spaniards to meet them in fight, as they were in want of victims for their sacrifices.

Cortés, without further delay, put himself at the head of his small corps of Spaniards and a large reinforcement of Tlascalan warriors. They were led by the younger Xicotencatl, who now appeared

¹ The Indian name of the capital,—the same as that of the province,—*Tepejacac*, was corrupted by the Spaniards into *Tepeaca*. It must be admitted to have gained by the corruption.

² “Y como aquello vió Cortés, comunicólo con todos nuestros Capitanes, y soldados: y fué acordado, que se hiziesse vn auto por ante Escriptuano, que diesse fe de todo lo passado, y que se diessen por esclauos.” Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 130.

to bury his recent animosity, and desirous to take a lesson in war under the chief who had so often foiled him in the field.³

The Tepeacans received their enemy on their borders. A bloody battle followed, in which the Spanish horse were somewhat embarrassed by the tall maize that covered part of the plain. They were successful in the end, and the Tepeacans, after holding their ground like good warriors, were at length routed with great slaughter. A second engagement, which took place a few days after, was followed by like decisive results; and the victorious Spaniards with their allies, marching straightway on the city of Tepeaca, entered it in triumph.⁴ No further resistance was attempted by the enemy, and the whole province, to avoid further calamities, eagerly tendered its submission. Cortés, however, inflicted the meditated chastisement on the places implicated in the massacre. The inhabitants were branded with a hot iron as slaves, and, after the royal fifth had been reserved, were distributed between his own men and the allies.⁵ The Spaniards were familiar with the system of

³ The chroniclers estimate his army at 50,000 warriors; one-half, according to Toribio, of the disposable military force of the republic. "De la cual (Tlascala), como ya tengo dicho, solian salir cien mil hombres de pelea." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 16.

⁴ "That night," says the credulous Herrera, speaking of the carouse that followed one of their victories, "the Indian allies had a grand supper of legs and arms; for, besides an incredible number of roasts on wooden spits, they had fifty thousand pots of stewed human flesh"! (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 15.) Such a banquet would not have smelt savory in the nostrils of Cortés.

⁵ "Y allí hizieron hazer el hierro con que se auian de herrar los que se tomauan por esclauos, que era una G., que quiere decir *guerra*." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 130.

repartimientos established in the islands; but this was the first example of slavery in New Spain.* It was justified, in the opinion of the general and his military casuists, by the aggravated offences of the party. The sentence, however, was not countenanced by the crown,⁶ which, as the colonial legislation abundantly shows, was ever at issue with the craving and mercenary spirit of the colonist.

Satisfied with this display of his vengeance, Cortés now established his headquarters at Tepeaca, which, situated in a cultivated country, afforded easy means for maintaining an army, while its position on the Mexican frontier made it a good *point d'appui* for future operations.

The Aztec government, since it had learned the issue of its negotiations at Tlascala, had been diligent in fortifying its frontier in that quarter. The garrisons usually maintained there were strengthened, and large bodies of men were marched in the same direction, with orders to occupy the strong positions on the borders. The conduct of these troops was in their usual style of arrogance and extortion, and greatly disgusted the inhabitants of the country.

* Solís, Conquista, lib. 5, cap. 3.

* [It may have been the first instance of natives being reduced to slavery by the Spaniards, but female slaves at least had been given to them on several previous occasions by the Mexican chiefs. The present case has also no connection with the system of *repartimientos*, by which, after the conquest was effected, the soil and its inhabitants were divided among the new possessors. In the case of the Tepeacans, no attempt was made to enslave the adult males, whose services were not needed, and who would have brought only embarrassment to their captors. See Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 135.—K.]

Among the places thus garrisoned by the Aztecs was Quauhquechollan,⁷ a city containing thirty thousand inhabitants, according to the historians, and lying to the southwest twelve leagues or more from the Spanish quarters. It stood at the extremity of a deep valley, resting against a bold range of hills, or rather mountains, and flanked by two rivers with exceedingly high and precipitous banks. The only avenue by which the town could be easily approached was protected by a stone wall more than twenty feet high and of great thickness.⁸ Into this place, thus strongly defended by art as well as by nature, the Aztec emperor had thrown a garrison of several thousand warriors, while a much more formidable force occupied the heights commanding the city.

The cacique of this strong post, impatient of the Mexican yoke, sent to Cortés, inviting him to march to his relief, and promising a co-operation of the citizens in an assault on the Aztec quarters. The general eagerly embraced the proposal, and detached Cristóval de Olid, with two hundred Spaniards and a strong body of Tlascalans, to support the friendly cacique.⁹ On the way, Olid was joined by many volunteers from the

⁷ Called by the Spaniards *Huacachula*, and spelt with every conceivable diversity by the old writers, who may be excused for stumbling over such a confusion of consonants.

⁸ "Y toda la Ciudad está cercada de muy fuerte Muro de cal y canto, tan alto, como quatro estados por de fuera de la Ciudad: é por de dentro está casi igual con el suelo. Y por toda la Muralla va su petril, tan alto, como medio estado, para pelear, tiene quatro entradas, tan anchas, como uno puede entrar á Caballo." Rel. Seg., p. 162.

⁹ This cavalier's name is usually spelt Olid by the chroniclers. In a copy of his own signature I find it written Oli.

Indian city and from the neighboring capital of Cholula, all equally pressing their services. The number and eagerness of these auxiliaries excited suspicions in the bosom of the cavalier. They were strengthened by the surmises of the soldiers of Narvaez, whose imaginations were still haunted, it seems, by the horrors of the *noche triste*, and who saw in the friendly alacrity of their new allies evidence of an insidious understanding with the Aztecs. Olid, catching this distrust, made a counter-march on Cholula, where he seized the suspected chiefs, who had been most forward in offering their services, and sent them under a strong guard to Cortés.

The general, after a careful examination, was satisfied of the integrity of the suspected parties. He, expressing his deep regret at the treatment they had received, made them such amends as he could by liberal presents, and, as he now saw the impropriety of committing an affair of such importance to other hands, put himself at the head of his remaining force and effected a junction with his officer in Cholula. He had arranged with the cacique of the city against which he was marching, that on the appearance of the Spaniards the inhabitants should rise on the garrison. Everything succeeded as he had planned. No sooner had the Christian battalions defiled on the plain before the town, than the inhabitants attacked the garrison with the utmost fury. The latter, abandoning the outer defences of the place, retreated to their own quarters in the principal *teocalli*, where they maintained a hard struggle with their adversaries. In

the heat of it, Cortés, at the head of his little body of horse, rode into the place, and directed the assault in person. The Aztecs made a fierce defence. But, fresh troops constantly arriving to support the assailants, the works were stormed, and every one of the garrison was put to the sword.¹⁰

The Mexican forces, meanwhile, stationed on the neighboring eminences, had marched down to the support of their countrymen in the town, and formed in order of battle in the suburbs, where they were encountered by the Tlascalan levies. "They mustered," says Cortés, speaking of the enemy, "at least thirty thousand men; and it was a brave sight for the eye to look on,—such a beautiful array of warriors glistening with gold and jewels and variegated feather-work."¹¹ The action was well contested between the two Indian armies. The suburbs were set on fire, and, in the midst of the flames, Cortés and his squadrons, rushing on the enemy, at length broke their array, and compelled them to fall back in disorder into the narrow gorge of the mountain, from which they had lately descended. The pass was rough and precipitous. Spaniards and Tlascalans followed close in the rear, and the light troops, scaling the high wall of the valley, poured down on the enemy's flanks. The heat was intense, and both parties were so

¹⁰ "I should have been very glad to have taken some alive," says Cortés, "who could have informed me of what was going on in the great city, and who had been lord there since the death of Montezuma. But I succeeded in saving only one; and he was more dead than alive." *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. *Lorenzana*, p. 159.

¹¹ "Y á ver que cosa era aquella, los quales eran mas de treinta mil Hombres, y la mas lúcida Gente, que hemos visto, porque trahian muchas Joyas de Oro, y Plata, y Plumajes." *Ibid.*, p. 160.

much exhausted by their efforts that it was with difficulty, says the chronicler, that the one could pursue, or the other fly.¹² They were not too weary, however, to slay. The Mexicans were routed with terrible slaughter. They found no pity from their Indian foes, who had a long account of injuries to settle with them. Some few sought refuge by flying higher up into the fastnesses of the sierra. They were followed by their indefatigable enemy, until, on the bald summit of the ridge, they reached the Mexican encampment. It covered a wide tract of ground. Various utensils, ornamented dresses, and articles of luxury, were scattered round, and the number of slaves in attendance showed the barbaric pomp with which the nobles of Mexico went to their campaigns.¹³ It was a rich booty for the victors, who spread over the deserted camp, and loaded themselves with the spoil, until the gathering darkness warned them to descend.¹⁴

¹² "Alcanzando muchos por una Cuesta arriba muy agra; y tal, que quando acabámos de encumbrar la Sierra, ni los Enemigos, ni nosotros podíamos ir atras, ni adelante: é assí caieron muchos de ellos muertos, y ahogados de la calor, sin herida ninguna." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 160.

¹³ "Porque demas de la Gente de Guerra, tenían mucho aparato de Servidores, y fornecimiento para su Real." Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁴ The story of the capture of this strong post is told very differently by Captain Diaz. According to him, Olid, when he had fallen back on Cholula, in consequence of the refusal of his men to advance under the strong suspicion which they entertained of some foul practice from their allies, received such a stinging rebuke from Cortés that he compelled his troops to resume their march, and, attacking the enemy "with the fury of a tiger," totally routed them. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 132.) But this version of the affair is not endorsed, so far as I am aware, by any contemporary. Cortés is so compendious in his report that it is often necessary to supply the omissions with the details of other writers. But, where he is posi-

Cortés followed up the blow by assaulting the strong town of Itzocan, held also by a Mexican garrison, and situated in the depths of a green valley watered by artificial canals and smiling in all the rich abundance of this fruitful region of the plateau.¹⁵ The place, though stoutly defended, was stormed and carried; the Aztecs were driven across a river which ran below the town, and, although the light bridges that traversed it were broken down in the flight, whether by design or accident, the Spaniards, fording and swimming the stream as they could, found their way to the opposite bank, following up the chase with the eagerness of bloodhounds. Here, too, the booty was great; and the Indian auxiliaries flocked by thousands to the banners of the chief who so surely led them on to victory and plunder.¹⁶

Soon afterwards, Cortés returned to his headquarters at Tepeaca. Thence he detached his officers on expeditions which were usually successful.

tive in his statements,—unless there be some reason to suspect a bias,—his practice of writing on the spot, and the peculiar facilities for information afforded by his position, make him decidedly the best authority.

¹⁵ Cortés, with an eye less sensible to the picturesque than his great predecessor in the track of discovery, Columbus, was full as quick in detecting the capabilities of the soil. “Tiene un Valle redondo muy fertil de Frutas, y Algodon, que en ninguna parte de los Puertos arriba se hace por la gran frialdad; y allí es Tierra caliente, y cáusalo, que está muy abrigada de Sierras; todo este Valle se riega por muy buenas Azequias, que tienen muy bien sacadas, y concertadas.” *Rel. Seg. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 164, 165.

¹⁶ So numerous, according to Cortés, that they covered hill and dale, as far as the eye could reach, mustering more than a hundred and twenty thousand strong! (*Ibid.*, p. 162.) When the Conquerors attempt anything like a precise numeration, it will be as safe to substitute “a multitude,” “a great force,” etc., trusting the amount to the reader’s own imagination.

Sandoval, in particular, marched against a large body of the enemy lying between the camp and Vera Cruz, defeated them in two decisive battles, and thus restored the communications with the port.

The result of these operations was the reduction of that populous and cultivated territory which lies between the great *volcan*, on the west, and the mighty skirts of Orizaba, on the east. Many places, also, in the neighboring province of Mixtecapan acknowledged the authority of the Spaniards, and others from the remote region of Oaxaca sent to claim their protection. The conduct of Cortés towards his allies had gained him great credit for disinterestedness and equity. The Indian cities in the adjacent territory appealed to him, as their umpire, in their differences with one another, and cases of disputed succession in their governments were referred to his arbitration. By his discreet and moderate policy he insensibly acquired an ascendancy over their counsels which had been denied to the ferocious Aztec. His authority extended wider and wider every day; and a new empire grew up in the very heart of the land, forming a counterpoise to the colossal power which had so long overshadowed it.¹⁷

Cortés now felt himself strong enough to put in

¹⁷ For the hostilities with the Indian tribes, noticed in the preceding pages, see, in addition to the Letter of Cortés, so often cited, Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 15,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 15, 16,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 90,—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 130, 132, 134,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 114–117,—P. Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, dec. 5, cap. 6,—Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.

execution the plans for recovering the capital, over which he had been brooding ever since the hour of his expulsion. He had greatly undervalued the resources of the Aztec monarchy. He was now aware, from bitter experience, that, to vanquish it, his own forces, and all he could hope to muster, would be incompetent, without a very extensive support from the Indians themselves. A large army would, moreover, require large supplies for its maintenance, and these could not be regularly obtained, during a protracted siege, without the friendly co-operation of the natives. On such support he might now safely calculate from Tlascala and the other Indian territories, whose warriors were so eager to serve under his banners. His past acquaintance with them had instructed him in their national character and system of war; while the natives who had fought under his command, if they had caught little of the Spanish tactics, had learned to act in concert with the white men and to obey him implicitly as their commander. This was a considerable improvement in such wild and disorderly levies, and greatly augmented the strength derived from numbers.

Experience showed that in a future conflict with the capital it would not do to trust to the causeways, but that, to succeed, he must command the lake. He proposed, therefore, to build a number of vessels like those constructed under his orders in Montezuma's time and afterwards destroyed by the inhabitants. For this he had still the services of the same experienced shipbuilder, Martin Lopez, who, as we have seen, had fortunately escaped the

slaughter of the "Melancholy Night." Cortés now sent this man to Tlascala, with orders to build thirteen brigantines, which might be taken to pieces and carried on the shoulders of the Indians to be launched on the waters of Lake Tezcuco. The sails, rigging, and iron-work were to be brought from Vera Cruz, where they had been stored since their removal from the dismantled ships. It was a bold conception, that of constructing a fleet to be transported across forest and mountain before it was launched on its destined waters! But it suited the daring genius of Cortés, who, with the co-operation of his staunch Tlascalan confederates, did not doubt his ability to carry it into execution.

It was with no little regret that the general learned at this time the death of his good friend Maxixca, the old lord of Tlascala, who had stood by him so steadily in the hour of adversity. He had fallen a victim to that terrible epidemic, the smallpox, which was now sweeping over the land like fire over the prairies, smiting down prince and peasant, and adding another to the long train of woes that followed the march of the white men. It was imported into the country, it is said, by a negro slave in the fleet of Narvaez.¹⁸ It first broke out in Cempoalla. The poor natives, ignorant of

¹⁸ "La primera fué de viruela, y comenzó de esta manera. Siendo Capitan y Governador Hernando Cortés al tiempo que el Capitan Pánfilo de Narvaez desembarcó en esta tierra, en uno de sus navíos vino un negro herido de viruelas, la cual enfermedad nunca en esta tierra se habia visto, y esta sazón estaba esta nueva España en estremo muy llena de gente." Toribio, *Hist. de los Indios*, MS., Parte 1, cap. 1.

the best mode of treating the loathsome disorder, sought relief in their usual practice of bathing in cold water, which greatly aggravated their trouble. From Cempoalla it spread rapidly over the neighboring country, and, penetrating through Tlascala, reached the Aztec capital, where Montezuma's successor, Cuitlahua, fell one of its first victims. Thence it swept down towards the borders of the Pacific, leaving its path strewn with the dead bodies of the natives, who, in the strong language of a contemporary, perished in heaps like cattle stricken with the murrain.¹⁹ It does not seem to have been fatal to the Spaniards, many of whom, probably, had already had the disorder, and who were, at all events, acquainted with the proper method of treating it.

The death of Maxixca was deeply regretted by the troops, who lost in him a true and most efficient ally. With his last breath he commended them to his son and successor, as the great beings whose coming into the country had been so long predicted by the oracles.²⁰ He expressed a desire to die in the profession of the Christian faith. Cortés no sooner learned his condition than he despatched Father Olmedo to Tlascala. The friar found that Maxixca had already caused a crucifix to be placed before his sick couch, as the object of his adoration.

¹⁹ "Morian como chinchas á montones." (Toribio, *Hist. de los Indios*, ubi supra.) "So great was the number of those who died of this disease that there was no possibility of burying them, and in Mexico the dead were thrown into the canals, then filled with water, until the air was poisoned with the stench of putrid bodies." Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, lib. 8, cap. 1.

²⁰ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 136.

After explaining, as intelligibly as he could, the truths of revelation, he baptized the dying chieftain; and the Spaniards had the satisfaction to believe that the soul of their benefactor was exempted from the doom of eternal perdition that hung over the unfortunate Indian who perished in his unbelief.²¹

Their late brilliant successes seem to have reconciled most of the disaffected soldiers to the prosecution of the war. There were still a few among them, the secretary Duero, Bermudez the treasurer, and others high in office, or wealthy hidalgos, who looked with disgust on another campaign, and now loudly reiterated their demand of a free passage to Cuba. To this Cortés, satisfied with the support on which he could safely count, made no further objection. Having once given his consent, he did all in his power to facilitate their departure and provide for their comfort. He ordered the best ship at Vera Cruz to be placed at their disposal, to be well supplied with provisions and everything necessary for the voyage, and sent Alvarado to the coast to superintend the embarkation. He took the most courteous leave of them, with assurances of his own unalterable regard. But, as the event proved, those who could part from him at this crisis had little sympathy with his fortunes; and we find Duero not long afterwards in Spain, supporting claims of Velasquez before the emperor, in opposition to those of his former friend and commander.

The loss of these few men was amply compen-

²¹ Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 39.

sated by the arrival of others, whom Fortune—to use no higher term—most unexpectedly threw in his way. The first of these came in a small vessel sent from Cuba by the governor, Velasquez, with stores for the colony at Vera Cruz. He was not aware of the late transactions in the country, and of the discomfiture of his officer. In the vessel came despatches, it is said, from Fonseca, bishop of Burgos, instructing Narvaez to send Cortés, if he had not already done so, for trial to Spain.²² The alcalde of Vera Cruz, agreeably to the general's instructions, allowed the captain of the bark to land, who had no doubt that the country was in the hands of Narvaez. He was undeceived by being seized, together with his men, so soon as they had set foot on shore. The vessel was then secured; and the commander and his crew, finding out their error, were persuaded without much difficulty to join their countrymen in Tlascala.

A second vessel, sent soon after by Velasquez, shared the same fate, and those on board consented, also, to take their chance in the expedition under Cortés.

About the same time, Garay, the governor of Jamaica, fitted out three ships with an armed force to plant a colony on the Panuco, a river which pours into the Gulf a few degrees north of Villa Rica. Garay persisted in establishing this settlement, in contempt of the claims of Cortés, who had already entered into a friendly communication with the inhabitants of that region. But the crews experienced such a rough reception from the natives on landing, and lost so many men, that they were

²² Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 131.

glad to take to their vessels again. One of these foundered in a storm. The others put into the port of Vera Cruz to restore the men, much weakened by hunger and disease. Here they were kindly received, their wants supplied, their wounds healed; when they were induced, by the liberal promises of Cortés, to abandon the disastrous service of their employer and enlist under his own prosperous banner. The reinforcements obtained from these sources amounted to full a hundred and fifty men, well provided with arms and ammunition, together with twenty horses. By this strange concurrence of circumstances, Cortés saw himself in possession of the supplies he most needed; that, too, from the hands of his enemies, whose costly preparations were thus turned to the benefit of the very man whom they were designed to ruin.

His good fortune did not stop here. A ship from the Canaries touched at Cuba, freighted with arms and military stores for the adventurers in the New World. Their commander heard there of the recent discoveries in Mexico, and, thinking it would afford a favorable market for him, directed his course to Vera Cruz. He was not mistaken. The alcalde, by the general's orders, purchased both ship and cargo; and the crews, catching the spirit of adventure, followed their countrymen into the interior. There seemed to be a magic in the name of Cortés, which drew all who came within hearing of it under his standard.²³

²³ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 131, 133, 136.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, ubi supra.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 154, 167.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 16.

Having now completed the arrangements for settling his new conquests, there seemed to be no further reason for postponing his departure to Tlascala. He was first solicited by the citizens of Tepeaca to leave a garrison with them, to protect them from the vengeance of the Aztecs. Cortés acceded to the request, and, considering the central position of the town favorable for maintaining his conquests, resolved to plant a colony there. For this object he selected sixty of his soldiers, most of whom were disabled by wounds or infirmity. He appointed the *alcaldes*, *regidores*, and other functionaries of a civic magistracy. The place he called *Segura de la Frontera*, or Security of the Frontier.²⁴ It received valuable privileges as a city, a few years later, from the emperor Charles the Fifth,²⁵ and rose to some consideration in the age of the Conquest. But its consequence soon after declined. Even its Castilian name, with the same caprice which has decided the fate of more than one name in our own country, was gradually supplanted by its ancient one, and the little village of Tepeaca is all that now commemorates the once flourishing Indian capital, and the second Spanish colony in Mexico.

While at Segura, Cortés wrote that celebrated letter to the emperor—the second in the series—so often cited in the preceding pages. It takes up the narrative with the departure from Vera Cruz, and exhibits in a brief and comprehensive form the occurrences up to the time at which we are now ar-

²⁴ Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 156.

²⁵ Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 153.

rived. In the concluding page, the general, after noticing the embarrassments under which he labors, says, in his usual manly spirit, that he holds danger and fatigue light in comparison with the attainment of his object, and that he is confident a short time will restore the Spaniards to their former position and repair all their losses.²⁶

He notices the resemblance of Mexico, in many of its features and productions, to the mother country, and requests that it may henceforth be called "New Spain of the Ocean Sea."²⁷ He finally requests that a commission may be sent out, at once, to investigate his conduct and to verify the accuracy of his statements.

This letter, which was printed at Seville the year after its reception, has been since reprinted, and translated, more than once.²⁸ It excited a great sensation at the court, and among the friends of science generally. The previous discoveries in the New World had disappointed the expectations which had been formed after the solution of the

²⁶ "E creo, como ya á Vuestra Magestad he dicho, que en muy breve tomará al estado, en que antes yo la tenia, é se restaurarán las pérdidas pasadas." Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 167.

²⁷ "Me pareció, que el mas conveniente nombre para esta dicha Tierra, era llamarse *la Nueva España del Mar Océano*: y así en nombre de Vuestra Magestad se le puso aqueste nombre; humildemente suplico á Vuestra Alteza lo tenga por bien, y mande, que se nombre así." (Ibid., p. 169.) The name of "New Spain," without other addition, had been before given by Grijalva to Yucatan. *Ante*, Book 2, Chapter 1.

²⁸ It was dated, "De la Villa Segura de la Frontera de esta Nueva-España, á treinta de Octubre de mil quinientos veinte años." But, in consequence of the loss of the ship intended to bear it, the letter was not sent till the spring of the following year; leaving the nation still in ignorance of the fate of the gallant adventurers in Mexico, and the magnitude of their discoveries.

grand problem of its existence. They had brought to light only rude tribes, which, however gentle and inoffensive in their manners, were still in the primitive stages of barbarism. Here was an authentic account of a vast nation, potent and populous, exhibiting an elaborate social polity, well advanced in the arts of civilization, occupying a soil that teemed with mineral treasures and with a boundless variety of vegetable products, stores of wealth, both natural and artificial, that seemed, for the first time, to realize the golden dreams in which the great discoverer of the New World had so fondly, and in his own day so fallaciously, indulged. Well might the scholar of that age exult in the revelation of these wonders, which so many had long, but in vain, desired to see.²⁹

With this letter went another to the emperor, signed, as it would seem, by nearly every officer and soldier in the camp. It expatiated on the obstacles thrown in the way of the expedition by Velasquez and Narvaez, and the great prejudice this had caused to the royal interests. It then set forth the services of Cortés, and besought the emperor to confirm him in his authority, and not to allow any interference with one who, from his personal character, his intimate knowledge of the land and its people, and the attachment of his soldiers, was

²⁹ The state of feeling occasioned by these discoveries may be seen in the correspondence of Peter Martyr, then residing at the court of Castile. See, in particular, his epistle, dated March, 1521, to his noble pupil, the Marquis de Mondejar, in which he dwells with unbounded satisfaction on all the rich stores of science which the expedition of Cortés had thrown open to the world. *Opus Epistolarum*, ep. 771.

the man best qualified in all the world to achieve the conquest of the country.³⁰

It added not a little to the perplexities of Cortés that he was still in entire ignorance of the light in which his conduct was regarded in Spain. He had not even heard whether his despatches, sent the year preceding from Vera Cruz, had been received. Mexico was as far removed from all intercourse with the civilized world as if it had been placed at the antipodes. Few vessels had entered, and none had been allowed to leave, its ports. The governor of Cuba, an island distant but a few days' sail, was yet ignorant, as we have seen, of the fate of his armament. On the arrival of every new vessel or fleet on these shores, Cortés might well doubt whether it brought aid to his undertaking, or a royal commission to supersede him. His sanguine spirit relied on the former; though the latter was much the more probable, considering the intimacy of his enemy, the governor, with Bishop Fonseca, a man jealous of his authority, and one who, from his station at the head of the Indian department, held a predominant control over the affairs of the New World. It was the policy of Cortés, therefore, to lose no time; to push forward his preparations, lest another should be permitted to snatch the laurel now almost within his grasp. Could he but reduce

³⁰ This memorial is in that part of my collection made by the former President of the Spanish Academy, Vargas Ponce. It is signed by four hundred and forty-four names; and it is remarkable that this roll, which includes every other familiar name in the army, should not contain that of Bernal Diaz del Castillo. It can only be accounted for by his illness; as he tells us he was confined to his bed by a fever about this time. *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 134.

the Aztec capital, he felt that he should be safe, and that, in whatever light his irregular proceedings might now be viewed, his services in that event would far more than counterbalance them in the eyes both of the crown and of the country.

The general wrote, also, to the Royal Audience at St. Domingo, in order to interest them in his cause. He sent four vessels to the same island, to obtain a further supply of arms and ammunition; and, the better to stimulate the cupidity of adventurers and allure them to the expedition, he added specimens of the beautiful fabrics of the country, and of its precious metals.³¹ The funds for procuring these important supplies were, probably, derived from the plunder gathered in the late battles, and the gold which, as already remarked, had been saved from the general wreck by the Castilian convoy.

It was the middle of December when Cortés, having completed all his arrangements, set out on his return to Tlascala, ten or twelve leagues distant. He marched in the van of the army, and took the way of Cholula. How different was his condition from that in which he had left the republican capital not five months before! His march was a triumphal procession, displaying the various banners and military ensigns taken from the enemy, long files of captives, and all the rich spoils of con-

³¹ Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 179.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 18.—Alonso de Avila went as the bearer of despatches to St. Domingo. Bernal Diaz, who is not averse, now and then, to a fling at his commander, says that Cortés was willing to get rid of this gallant cavalier, because he was too independent and plain-spoken. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 136.

quest gleaned from many a hard-fought field. As the army passed through the towns and villages, the inhabitants poured out to greet them, and as they drew near to Tlascala, the whole population, men, women, and children, came forth, celebrating their return with songs, dancing, and music. Arches decorated with flowers were thrown across the streets through which they passed, and a Tlascalan orator addressed the general, on his entrance into the city, in a lofty panegyric on his late achievements, proclaiming him the "avenger of the nation." Amidst this pomp and triumphal show, Cortés and his principal officers were seen clad in deep mourning in honor of their friend Maxixca. And this tribute of respect to the memory of their venerated ruler touched the Tlascalans more sensibly than all the proud display of military trophies.³²

The general's first act was to confirm the son of his deceased friend in the succession, which had been contested by an illegitimate brother. The youth was but twelve years of age; and Cortés prevailed on him without difficulty to follow his father's example and receive baptism. He afterwards knighted him with his own hand; the first instance, probably, of the order of chivalry being conferred on an American Indian.³³ The elder Xicotencatl was also persuaded to embrace Christianity; and the example of their rulers had its ob-

³² Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 136.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.

³³ *Ibid.*, ubi supra.—"Híçolo," says Herrera, "i armóle caballero, al vso de Castilla; i porque lo fuese de Jesu-Christo, le hiço, bautiçar, i se llamó D. Lorenço Maxiscatzin."

vious effect in preparing the minds of the people for the reception of the truth. Cortés, whether from the suggestions of Olmedo, or from the engrossing nature of his own affairs, did not press the work of conversion further at this time, but wisely left the good seed, already sown, to ripen in secret, till time should bring forth the harvest.

The Spanish commander, during his short stay in Tlascala, urged forward the preparations for the campaign. He endeavored to drill the Tlascalans and to give them some idea of European discipline and tactics. He caused new arms to be made, and the old ones to be put in order. Powder was manufactured with the aid of sulphur obtained by some adventurous cavaliers from the smoking throat of Popocatepetl.³⁴ The construction of the brigantines went forward prosperously under the direction of Lopez, with the aid of the Tlascalans.³⁵ Timber was cut in the forests, and pitch, an article unknown to the Indians, was obtained from the pines on the neighboring Sierra de Malinche. The rigging and other appurtenances were transported by the Indian *tamanes* from Villa Rica; and by Christmas the work was so far advanced that it was no longer necessary for Cortés to delay the march to Mexico.

³⁴ For an account of the manner in which this article was procured by Montaña and his doughty companions, see vol. ii., p. 227.

³⁵ "Ansí se hicieron trece bergantines en el barrio de Atempa, junto á una hermita que se llama San Buenaventura, los quales hizo y otro Martin Lopez uno de los primeros conquistadores, y le ayudó Néguez Gomez." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

CHAPTER VII

GUATEMOZIN, EMPEROR OF THE AZTECS—PREPARATIONS FOR THE MARCH—MILITARY CODE—SPANIARDS CROSS THE SIERRA—ENTER TEZCUCO—PRINCE IXTLILXOCHITL

1520

WHILE the events related in the preceding chapter were passing, an important change had taken place in the Aztec monarchy. Montezuma's brother and successor, Cuitlahua, had suddenly died of the smallpox, after a brief reign of four months,—brief, but glorious, for it had witnessed the overthrow of the Spaniards and their expulsion from Mexico.¹ On the death of their warlike chief, the electors were convened, as usual, to supply the vacant throne. It was an office of great

¹ Solís dismisses this prince with the remark "that he reigned but a few days; long enough, however, for his indolence and apathy to efface the memory of his name among the people." (*Conquista*, lib. 4, cap. 16.) Whence the historiographer of the Indies borrowed the coloring for this portrait I cannot conjecture; certainly not from the ancient authorities, which uniformly delineate the character and conduct of the Aztec sovereign in the light represented in the text. Cortés, who ought to know, describes him "as held to be very wise and valiant." *Rel. Seg.*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 166.—See, also, Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, MS., lib. 12, cap. 29,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 88,—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 16,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 118.

responsibility in the dark hour of their fortunes. The *teoteuctli*, or high-priest, invoked the blessing of the supreme God on their deliberations. His prayer is still extant. It was the last one ever made on a similar occasion in Anahuac, and a few extracts from it may interest the reader, as a specimen of Aztec eloquence:

“ O Lord! thou knowest that the days of our sovereign are at an end, for thou hast placed him beneath thy feet. He abides in the place of his retreat; he has trodden the path which we are all to tread; he has gone to the house whither we are all to follow,—the house of eternal darkness, where no light cometh. He is gathered to his rest, and no one henceforth shall disquiet him. . . . All these were the princes, his predecessors, who sat on the imperial throne, directing the affairs of thy kingdom; for thou art the universal lord and emperor, by whose will and movement the whole world is directed; thou needest not the counsel of another. They laid down the intolerable burden of government, and left it to him, their successor. Yet he sojourned but a few days in his kingdom,—but a few days had we enjoyed his presence, when thou summonedst him away to follow those who had ruled over the land before him. And great cause has he for thankfulness, that thou hast relieved him from so grievous a load, and placed him in tranquillity and rest. . . . Who now shall order matters for the good of the people and the realm? Who shall appoint the judges to administer justice to thy people? Who now shall bid the drum and the flute to sound, and gather together the veteran

soldiers and the men mighty in battle? Our Lord and our Defence! wilt thou, in thy wisdom, elect one who shall be worthy to sit on the throne of thy kingdom; one who shall bear the grievous burden of government; who shall comfort and cherish thy poor people, even as the mother cherisheth her offspring? . . . O Lord most merciful! pour forth thy light and thy splendor over this thine empire! . . . Order it so that thou shalt be served in all, and through all.”²

² The reader of Spanish will see that in the version in the text I have condensed the original, which abounds in the tautology and repetitions characteristic of the compositions of a rude people. “Señor nuestro, ya V. M. sabe como es muerto nuestro N.: ya lo habeis puesto debajo de vuestros pies: ya está en su recogimiento, y es ido por el camino que todos hemos de ir y á la casa donde hemos de morar, casa de perpetuas tinieblas, donde ni hay ventana, ni luz alguna: ya está en el reposo donde nadie le desasosegará. . . . Todos estos señores y reyes rigieron, gobernaron, y gozaron del señorío y dignidad real, y del trono y sitial del imperio, los cuales ordenaron y concertaron las cosas de vuestro reino, que sois el universal señor y emperador, por cuyo albedrio y motivo se rige todo el universo, y que no teneis necesidad de consejo de ningun otro. Ya estos dichos dejaron la carga intolerable del gobierno que tragaron sobre sus hombros, y lo dejaron á su sucesor N., el cual por algunos pocos dias tuvo en pie su señorío y reino, y ahora ya se ha ido en pos de ellos al otro mundo, porque vos le mandásteis que fuese y le llamásteis, y por haberle descargado de tan gran carga, y quitado tan gran trabajo, y haberle puesto en paz y en reposo, está muy obligado á daros gracias. Algunos pocos dias le lográmos, y ahora para siempre se ausentó de nosotros para nunca mas volver al mundo. . . . ¿Quien ordenará y dispondrá las cosas necesarias al bien del pueblo, señorío y reino? ¿Quien elegirá á los jueces particulares, que tengan carga de la gente baja por los barrios? ¿Quien mandará tocar el atambor y pifano para juntar gente para la guerra? ¿Y quien reunirá y acaudillará á los soldados viejos, y hombres diestros en la pelea? Señor nuestro y amparador nuestro! tenga por bien V. M. de elegir, y señalar alguna persona suficiente para que tenga vuestro trono, y lleve á cuestras la carga pesada del régimen de la república, regocige y regale á los populares, bien así como la madre regala á su hijo, poniéndole en su regazo. . . . O señor nuestro humanísimo! dad lumbre y resplandor de vuestra mano á esto reino! . . . Hágase como V. M. fuere servido en todo, y por todo.” Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 5.

The choice fell on Quauhtemotzin, or Guatemozin, as euphoniously corrupted by the Spaniards.³ He was nephew to the two last monarchs, and married his cousin, the beautiful princess Tecuichpo, Montezuma's daughter. "He was not more than twenty-five years old, and elegant in his person for an Indian," says one who had seen him often; "valiant, and so terrible that his followers trembled in his presence."⁴ He did not shrink from the perilous post that was offered to him; and, as he saw the tempest gathering darkly around, he prepared to meet it like a man. Though young, he had ample experience in military matters, and had distinguished himself above all others in the bloody conflicts of the capital. He bore a sort of religious hatred to the Spaniards, like that which Hannibal is said to have sworn, and which he certainly cherished, against his Roman foes.

By means of his spies, Guatemozin made himself acquainted with the movements of the Spaniards and their design to besiege the capital. He prepared for it by sending away the useless part of the population, while he called in his potent vassals

³ The Spaniards appear to have changed the *Qua*, beginning Aztec names, into *Gua*, in the same manner as, in the mother country, they changed the *Wad* at the beginning of Arabic names into *Guad*. (See Condé, *El Nubiense*, *Descripcion de España*, notas, passim.) The Aztec *tzin* was added to the names of sovereigns and great lords, as a mark of reverence. Thus, Cuitlahua was called Cuitlahuatzin. This termination, usually dropped by the Spaniards, has been retained from accident, or perhaps for the sake of euphony, in Guatemozin's name.

⁴ "Mancebo de hasta veynte y cinco años, bien gentil hombre para ser Indio, y muy esforçado, y se hizo temer de tal manera, que todos los suyos temblauan dél; y estaua casado con vna hija de Montezuma, bien hermosa muger para ser India." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 130.

from the neighborhood. He continued the plans of his predecessor for strengthening the defences of the city, reviewed his troops, and stimulated them by prizes to excel in their exercises. He made harangues to his soldiers to rouse them to a spirit of desperate resistance. He encouraged his vassals throughout the empire to attack the white men wherever they were to be met with, setting a price on their heads, as well as on the persons of all who should be brought alive to him in Mexico.⁵ And it was no uncommon thing for the Spaniards to find hanging up in the temples of the conquered places the arms and accoutrements of their unfortunate countrymen who had been seized and sent to the capital for sacrifice.⁶ Such was the young monarch who was now called to the tottering throne of the Aztecs; worthy, by his bold and magnanimous nature, to sway the sceptre of his country in the most flourishing period of her renown, and now, in her distress, devoting himself in the true spirit of a patriot prince to uphold her falling fortunes or bravely perish with them.⁷

We must now return to the Spaniards in Tlascalala, where we left them preparing to resume their march on Mexico. Their commander had the satisfaction to see his troops tolerably complete in their

⁵ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 19.

⁶ Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 134.

⁷ One may call to mind the beautiful invocation which Racine has put into the mouth of Joad:

“Venez, cher rejeton d’une vaillante race,
Remplir vos défenseurs d’une nouvelle audace;
Venez du diadème à leurs yeux vous couvrir,
Et périssez du moins en roi, s’il faut périr.”

ATHALIE, acte 4, scene 5.

appointments; varying, indeed, according to the condition of the different reinforcements which had arrived from time to time, but, on the whole, superior to those of the army with which he had first invaded the country. His whole force fell little short of six hundred men; forty of whom were cavalry, together with eighty arquebusiers and crossbowmen. The rest were armed with sword and target, and with the copper-headed pike of Chinantla. He had nine cannon of a moderate calibre, and was indifferently supplied with powder.⁸

As his forces were drawn up in order of march, Cortés rode through the ranks, exhorting his soldiers, as usual with him on these occasions, to be true to themselves and the enterprise in which they were embarked. He told them they were to march against *rebels*, who had once acknowledged allegiance to the Spanish sovereign;⁹ against barbarians, the enemies of their religion. They were to fight the battles of the Cross and of the crown; to fight their own battles, to wipe away the stain from their arms, to avenge their injuries, and the loss of the dear companions who had been butchered on the field or on the accursed altar of sacrifice. Never was there a war which offered higher incentives to the Christian cavalier; a war which opened

⁸ Rel. Tercera de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 183.—Most, if not all, of the authorities—a thing worthy of note—concur in this estimate of the Spanish forces.

⁹ “Y como sin causa ninguna todos los Naturales de Colúa, que son los de la gran Ciudad de Temixtitan, y los de todas las otras Provincias á ellas sujetas, no solamente se habian *rebelado* contra Vuestra Magestad.” Ibid., ubi supra.

to him riches and renown in this life, and an imperishable glory in that to come.¹⁰

Thus did the politic chief touch all the secret springs of devotion, honor, and ambition in the bosoms of his martial audience, waking the mettle of the most sluggish before leading him on the perilous emprise. They answered with acclamations that they were ready to die in defence of the Faith, and would either conquer, or leave their bones with those of their countrymen in the waters of the Tezcucu.

The army of the allies next passed in review before the general. It is variously estimated by writers from a hundred and ten to a hundred and fifty thousand soldiers! The palpable exaggeration, no less than the discrepancy, shows that little reliance can be placed on any estimate. It is certain, however, that it was a multitudinous array, consisting not only of the flower of the Tlascalan warriors, but of those of Cholula, Tepeaca, and the neighboring territories, which had submitted to the Castilian crown.¹¹

They were armed, after the Indian fashion, with bows and arrows, the glassy *maquahuitl*, and the long pike, which formidable weapon Cortés, as we have seen, had introduced among his own troops. They were divided into battalions, each having its

¹⁰ Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 184.—“Porque demas del premio, que les davia en el cielo, se les seguirian en esto mundo grandissima honra, riquezas inestimables.” Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chichimeca, MS., cap. 91.

¹¹ “Cosa muy de ver,” says Father Sahagun, without hazarding any precise number, “en la cantidad y en los aparejos que llevaban.” Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 12, cap. 30, MS.

own banner, displaying the appropriate arms or emblem of its company. The four great chiefs of the nation marched in the van; three of them venerable for their years, and showing, in the insignia which decorated their persons, the evidence of many a glorious feat in arms. The panache of many-colored plumes floated from their casques, set in emeralds or other precious stones. Their *es-caupil*, or stuffed doublet of cotton, was covered with the graceful surcoat of feather-work, and their feet were protected by sandals embossed with gold. Four young pages followed, bearing their weapons, and four others supported as many standards, on which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of the four great divisions of the republic.¹² The Tlascalans, though frugal in the extreme, and rude in their way of life, were as ambitious of display in their military attire as any of the races on the plateau. As they defiled before Cortés, they saluted him by waving their banners and by a flourish of their wild music, which the general acknowledged by courteously raising his cap as they passed.¹³ The Tlascalan warriors, and especially the younger Xicotencatl, their commander, affected to imitate their European masters, not merely in their tactics, but in minuter matters of military etiquette.

Cortés, with the aid of Marina, made a brief address to his Indian allies. He reminded them that he was going to fight their battles against their ancient enemies. He called on them to support him

¹² Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 20.

¹³ Ibid., ubi supra.

in a manner worthy of their renowned republic. To those who remained at home, he committed the charge of aiding in the completion of the brigantines, on which the success of the expedition so much depended; and he requested that none would follow his banner who were not prepared to remain till the final reduction of the capital.¹⁴ This address was answered by shouts, or rather yells, of defiance, showing the exultation felt by his Indian confederates at the prospect of at last avenging their manifold wrongs and humbling their haughty enemy.

Before setting out on the expedition, Cortés published a code of ordinances, as he terms them, or regulations for the army, too remarkable to be passed over in silence. The preamble sets forth that in all institutions, whether divine or human,—if the latter have any worth,—order is the great law. The ancient chronicles inform us that the greatest captains in past times owed their successes quite as much to the wisdom of their ordinances as to their own valor and virtue. The situation of the Spaniards eminently demanded such a code; a mere handful of men as they were, in the midst of countless enemies, most cunning in the management of their weapons and in the art of war. The instrument then reminds the army that the conversion of the heathen is the work most acceptable in the eye of the Almighty, and one that will be sure to receive his support. It calls on every soldier to regard this as the prime object of the expedition, *without which the war would be*

¹⁴ Herrera, Hist. general, loc. cit.

*manifestly unjust, and every acquisition made by it, a robbery.*¹⁵

The general solemnly protests that the principal motive which operates in his own bosom is the desire to wean the natives from their gloomy idolatry and to impart to them the knowledge of a purer faith; and next, to recover for his master, the emperor, the dominions which of right belong to him.¹⁶

The ordinances then prohibit all blasphemy against God or the saints; a vice much more frequent among Catholic than Protestant nations, arising, perhaps, less from difference of religion than of physical temperament,—for the warm sun of the South, under which Catholicism prevails, stimulates the sensibilities to the more violent expression of passion.¹⁷

Another law is directed against gaming, to

¹⁵ “Que su principal motivo é intencion sea apartar y desarraigar de las dichas idolatrías á todos los naturales destas partes y reducirlos ó á lo menos desear su salvacion y que sean reducidos al conocimiento de Dios y de su Santa Fe católica: porque si con otra intencion se hiciese la dicha guerra seria injusta y todo lo que en ella se oviese Onoloxio é obligado á restitucion.” Ordenanzas militares, MS.

¹⁶ “E desde ahora protesto en nombre de S. M. que mi principal intencion é motivo es facer esta guerra é las otras que ficiere por traer y reducir á los dichos naturales al dicho conocimiento de nuestra Santa Fe é creencia; y despues por los sozjugar é supeditar debajo del yugo é dominio imperial é real de su Sacra Magestad, á quien juridicamente el Señorío de todas estas partes.” Ordenanzas militares, MS.

¹⁷ “Ce n'est qu'en Espagne et en Italie,” says the penetrating historian of the Italian Republics, “qu'on rencontre cette habitude vicieuse, absolument inconnue aux peuples protestants, et qu'il ne faut point confondre avec les grossiers juremens que le peuple en tout pays mêle à ses discours. Dans tous les accès de colère des peuples du Midi, ils s'attaquent aux objets de leur culte, ils les menacent, et ils accablent de paroles outrageantes la Divinité elle-même, le Rédempteur ou ses saints.” Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes, cap. 126.

which the Spaniards, in all ages, have been peculiarly addicted. Cortés, making allowance for the strong national propensity, authorizes it under certain limitations, but prohibits the use of dice altogether.¹⁸ Then follow other laws against brawls and private combats, against personal taunts and the irritating sarcasms of rival companies; rules for the more perfect discipline of the troops, whether in camp or the field. Among others is one prohibiting any captain, under pain of death, from charging the enemy without orders; a practice noticed as most pernicious and of too frequent occurrence,—showing the impetuous spirit and want of true military subordination in the bold cavaliers who followed the standard of Cortés.

The last ordinance prohibits any man, officer or private, from securing to his own use any of the booty taken from the enemy, whether it be gold, silver, precious stones, feather-work, stuffs, slaves, or other commodity, however or wherever obtained, in the city or in the field, and requires him to bring it forthwith to the presence of the general, or the officer appointed to receive it. The violation of this law was punished with death and confiscation of

¹⁸ Lucio Marineo, who witnessed all the dire effects of this national propensity at the Castilian court, where he was residing at this time, breaks out into the following animated apostrophe against it: "The gambler is he who wishes and conspires the death of his parents, he who swears falsely by God and by the life of his king and lord, he who kills his own soul and casts it into hell. What will not the gambler do, when he is not ashamed to lose his money, his time, his sleep, his reputation, his honor, and even life itself? So that, considering how great a number of men are incessantly engaged in play, the opinion seems to me well founded of those who say that *hell is filled with gamblers.*" *Cosas memorables de España* (ed. Sevilla, 1539), fol. 165.

property. So severe an edict may be thought to prove that, however much the *Conquistador* may have been influenced by spiritual considerations, he was by no means insensible to those of a temporal character.¹⁹

These provisions were not suffered to remain a dead letter. The Spanish commander, soon after their proclamation, made an example of two of his own slaves, whom he hanged for plundering the natives. A similar sentence was passed on a soldier for the like offence, though he allowed him to be cut down before the sentence was entirely executed. Cortés knew well the character of his followers; rough and turbulent spirits, who required to be ruled with an iron hand. Yet he was not eager to assert his authority on light occasions. The intimacy into which they were thrown by their peculiar situation, perils, and sufferings, in which all equally shared, and a common interest in the adventure, induced a familiarity between men and officers, most unfavorable to military discipline. The general's own manners, frank and liberal, seemed to invite this freedom, which, on ordinary occasions, he made no attempt to repress; perhaps finding it too difficult, or at least impolitic, since it afforded a safety-valve for the spirits of a licentious soldiery, that, if violently coerced, might have burst forth into open mutiny. But the limits of his

¹⁹ These regulations are reported with much uniformity by Herrera, Solís, Clavigero, and others, but with such palpable inaccuracy that it is clear they never could have seen the original instrument. The copy in my possession was taken from the Muñoz collection. As the document, though curious and highly interesting, has never been published, I have given it entire in the Appendix, No. 13.

forbearance were clearly defined; and any attempt to overstep them, or to violate the established regulations of the camp, brought a sure and speedy punishment on the offender. By thus tempering severity with indulgence, masking an iron will under the open bearing of a soldier, Cortés established a control over his band of bold and reckless adventurers, such as a pedantic martinet, scrupulous in enforcing the minutiae of military etiquette, could never have obtained.

The ordinances, dated on the twenty-second of December, were proclaimed to the assembled army on the twenty-sixth. Two days afterwards, the troops were on their march, and Cortés, at the head of his battalions, with colors flying and music playing, issued forth from the gates of the republican capital, which had so generously received him in his distress, and which now, for the second time, supplied him with the means for consummating his great enterprise. The population of the city, men, women, and children, hung on the rear of the army, taking a last leave of their countrymen, and imploring the gods to crown their arms with victory.

Notwithstanding the great force mustered by the Indian confederates, the Spanish general allowed but a small part of them now to attend him. He proposed to establish his headquarters at some place on the Tezcucan lake, whence he could annoy the Aztec capital by reducing the surrounding country, cutting off the supplies, and thus placing the city in a state of blockade.²⁰

²⁰ Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 20.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 127. The former historian states the

The direct assault on Mexico itself he intended to postpone until the arrival of the brigantines should enable him to make it with the greatest advantage. Meanwhile, he had no desire to encumber himself with a superfluous multitude, whom it would be difficult to feed; and he preferred to leave them at Tlascala, whence they might convey the vessels, when completed, to the camp, and aid him in his future operations.

Three routes presented themselves to Cortés by which he might penetrate into the Valley. He chose the most difficult, traversing the bold sierra which divides the eastern plateau from the western, and so rough and precipitous as to be scarcely practicable for the march of an army. He wisely judged that he should be less likely to experience annoyance from the enemy in this direction, as they might naturally confide in the difficulties of the ground for their protection.

The first day, the troops advanced five or six leagues, Cortés riding in the van, at the head of his little body of cavalry. They halted at the village of Tetzmellocan, at the base of the mountain chain which traverses the country, touching, at its southern limit, the mighty Iztaccihuatl, or "White Woman,"—white with the snows of ages.²¹ At this village they met with a friendly reception, and on

number of Indian allies who followed Cortés, at eighty thousand; the latter at ten thousand! *¿Quién sabe?*

²¹ This mountain, which, with its neighbor Popocatepetl, forms the great barrier—the *Herculis columnæ*—of the Mexican Valley, has been fancifully likened, from its long dorsal swell, to the back of a dromedary. (Tudor's Tour in North America, Let. 22.) It rises far above the limits of perpetual snow in the tropics, and its huge crest and sides, enveloped in its silver drapery, form one of the most

the following morning began the ascent of the sierra.

The path was steep and exceedingly rough. Thick matted bushes covered its surface, and the winter torrents had broken it into deep stony channels, hardly practicable for the passage of artillery, while the straggling branches of the trees, flung horizontally across the road, made it equally difficult for cavalry. The cold, as they rose higher, became intense. It was keenly felt by the Spaniards, accustomed of late to a warm, or at least temperate, climate; though the extreme toil with which they forced their way upward furnished the best means of resisting the weather. The only vegetation to be seen in these higher regions was the pine, dark forests of which clothed the sides of the mountains, till even these dwindled into a thin and stunted growth. It was night before the way-worn soldiers reached the bald crest of the sierra, where they lost no time in kindling their fires; and, huddling round their bivouacs, they warmed their frozen limbs and prepared their evening repast.

With the earliest dawn, the troops were again in motion. Mass was said, and they began their descent, more difficult and painful than their ascent on the day preceding; for, in addition to the natural obstacles of the road, they found it strewn with huge pieces of timber and trees, obviously felled for the purpose by the natives. Cortés ordered up a body of light troops to clear away the impediments, and the army again resumed its march, but

striking objects in the magnificent *coup-d'œil* presented to the inhabitants of the capital.

with the apprehension that the enemy had prepared an ambuscade, to surprise them when they should be entangled in the pass. They moved cautiously forward, straining their vision to pierce the thick gloom of the forest, where the wily foe might be lurking. But they saw no living thing, except only the wild inhabitants of the woods, and flocks of the *sopilote*, the voracious vulture of the country, which, in anticipation of a bloody banquet, hung, like a troop of evil spirits, on the march of the army.

As they descended, the Spaniards felt a sensible and most welcome change in the temperature. The character of the vegetation changed with it, and the funereal pine, their only companion of late, gave way to the sturdy oak, to the sycamore, and, lower down, to the graceful pepper-tree mingling its red berry with the dark foliage of the forest; while, in still lower depths, the gaudy-colored creepers might be seen flinging their gay blossoms over the branches and telling of a softer and more luxurious climate.

At length the army emerged on an open level, where the eye, unobstructed by intervening wood or hill-top, could range, far and wide, over the Valley of Mexico. There it lay bathed in the golden sunshine, stretched out, as it were, in slumber, in the arms of the giant hills which clustered, like a phalanx of guardian genii, around it. The magnificent vision, new to many of the spectators, filled them with rapture. Even the veterans of Cortés could not withhold their admiration, though this was soon followed by a bitter feeling, as they re-

called the sufferings which had befallen them within these beautiful but treacherous precincts. It made us feel, says the lion-hearted Conqueror, in his Letters, that "we had no choice but victory or death; and, our minds once resolved, we moved forward with as light a step as if we had been going on an errand of certain pleasure."²²

As the Spaniards advanced, they beheld the neighboring hill-tops blazing with beacon-fires showing that the country was already alarmed and mustering to oppose them. The general called on his men to be mindful of their high reputation; to move in order, closing up their ranks, and to obey implicitly the commands of their officers.²³ At every turn among the hills, they expected to meet the forces of the enemy drawn up to dispute their passage. And, as they were allowed to pass the defiles unmolested, and drew near to the open plains, they were prepared to see them occupied by a formidable host, who would compel them to fight over again the battle of Otumba. But, although clouds of dusky warriors were seen, from time to time, hovering on the highlands, as if watching their progress, they experienced no interruption till they reached a *barranca*, or deep ravine, through which flowed a little river, crossed by a bridge partly demolished. On the opposite side a considerable body

²² "Y prometimos todos de nunca de ella salir, sin Victoria, ó dejar allí las vidas. Y con esta determinacion ibamos todos tan alegres, como si fuéramos á cosa de mucho placer." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 188.

²³ "Y yo torné á rogar, y encomendar mucho á los Españoles, que hiciessen, como siempre habian hecho, y como se esperaba de sus Personas; y que nadie no se desmandasse, y que fuessen con mucho concierto, y orden por su Camino." Ibid., ubi supra.

of Indians was stationed, as if to dispute the passage; but, whether distrusting their own numbers, or intimidated by the steady advance of the Spaniards, they offered them no annoyance, and were quickly dispersed by a few resolute charges of cavalry. The army then proceeded, without molestation, to a small town, called Coatepec, where they halted for the night. Before retiring to his own quarters, Cortés made the rounds of the camp, with a few trusty followers, to see that all was safe.²⁴ He seemed to have an eye that never slumbered, and a frame incapable of fatigue. It was the indomitable spirit within, which sustained him.²⁵

Yet he may well have been kept awake through the watches of the night, by anxiety and doubt. He was now but three leagues from Tezcucó, the far-famed capital of the Acolhuans. He proposed to establish his headquarters, if possible, at this place. Its numerous dwellings would afford ample accommodations for his army. An easy communication with Tlascala, by a different route from that which he had traversed, would furnish him with the means of readily obtaining supplies from that friendly country, and for the safe trans-

²⁴ "E como la Gente de pie venia algo cansada, y se hacia tarde, dormimos en una Poblacion, que se dice Coatepeque. . . . E yo con diez de Caballo comenzé la Vela, y Ronda de la prima, y hice, que toda la Gente estubiesse muy apercibida." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 188, 189.

²⁵ For the preceding pages, giving the account of the march, besides the letter of Cortés, so often quoted, see Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 121,—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 18,—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 137,—Camargo, *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 2, lib. 10, cap. 20,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Relacion de la venida de los Españoles y Principio de la Ley Evangélica* (México, 1829), p. 9.

portation of the brigantines, when finished, to be launched on the waters of the Tezcucó. But he had good reason to distrust the reception he should meet with in the capital; for an important revolution had taken place there since the expulsion of the Spaniards from Mexico, of which it will be necessary to give some account.

The reader will remember that the cacique of that place, named Cacama, was deposed by Cortés, during his first residence in the Aztec metropolis, in consequence of a projected revolt against the Spaniards, and that the crown had been placed on the head of a younger brother, Cuicuitzca. The deposed prince was among the prisoners carried away by Cortés, and perished with the others, in the terrible passage of the causeway, on the *noche triste*. His brother, afraid, probably, after the flight of the Spaniards, of continuing with his own vassals, whose sympathies were altogether with the Aztecs, accompanied his friends in their retreat, and was so fortunate as to reach Tlascala in safety.

Meanwhile, a second son of Nezahualpilli, named Coanaco, claimed the crown, on his elder brother's death, as his own rightful inheritance. As he heartily joined his countrymen and the Aztecs in their detestation of the white men, his claims were sanctioned by the Mexican emperor. Soon after his accession, the new lord of Tezcucó had an opportunity of showing his loyalty to his imperial patron in an effectual manner.

A body of forty-five Spaniards, ignorant of the disasters in Mexico, were transporting thither a large quantity of gold, at the very time their coun-

trymen were on the retreat to Tlascala. As they passed through the Tezcucan territory, they were attacked by Coanaco's orders, most of them massacred on the spot, and the rest sent for sacrifice to Mexico. The arms and accoutrements of these unfortunate men were hung up as trophies in the temples, and their skins, stripped from their dead bodies, were suspended over the bloody shrines, as the most acceptable offering to the offended deities.²⁶

Some months after this event, the exiled prince, Cuicuitzca, wearied with his residence in Tlascala, and pining for his former royal state, made his way back secretly to Tezcucó, hoping, it would seem, to raise a party there in his favor. But, if such were his expectations, they were sadly disappointed; for no sooner had he set foot in the capital than he was betrayed to his brother, who, by the advice of Guatemozin, put him to death, as a traitor to his country.²⁷ Such was the posture of affairs in Tezcucó when Cortés, for the second time, approached its gates; and well might he doubt, not merely the nature of his reception there, but whether he would be permitted to enter it at all, without force of arms.

These apprehensions were dispelled the following morning, when, before the troops were well

²⁶ See *ante*, p. 210.—The skins of those immolated on the sacrificial stone were a common offering in the Indian temples, and the mad priests celebrated many of their festivals by publicly dancing with their own persons enveloped in these disgusting spoils of their victims. See Sahagun, *Hist. de Nueva-España*, *passim*.

²⁷ *Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 187.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 19.

under arms, an embassy was announced from the lord of Tezcuco. It consisted of several nobles, some of whom were known to the companions of Cortés. They bore a golden flag in token of amity, and a present of no great value to Cortés. They brought also a message from the cacique, imploring the general to spare his territories, inviting him to take up his quarters in his capital, and promising on his arrival to become the vassal of the Spanish sovereign.

Cortés dissembled the satisfaction with which he listened to these overtures, and sternly demanded of the envoys an account of the Spaniards who had been massacred, insisting, at the same time, on the immediate restitution of the plunder. But the Indian nobles excused themselves by throwing the whole blame upon the Aztec emperor, by whose orders the deed had been perpetrated, and who now had possession of the treasure. They urged Cortés not to enter the city that day, but to pass the night in the suburbs, that their master might have time to prepare suitable accommodations for him. The Spanish commander, however, gave no heed to this suggestion, but pushed forward his march, and at noon, on the thirty-first of December, 1520, entered, at the head of his legions, the venerable walls of Tezcuco, "the place of rest," as not inaptly denominated.²⁸

He was struck, as when he before visited this populous city, with the solitude and silence which

²⁸ Tezcuco, a Chichimec name, according to Ixtlilxochitl, signifying "place of detention or rest," because the various tribes from the North halted there on their entrance into Anahuac. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10.

reigned throughout its streets. He was conducted to the palace of Nezahualpilli,* which was assigned as his quarters. It was an irregular pile of low buildings, covering a wide extent of ground, like the royal residence occupied by the troops in Mexico. It was spacious enough to furnish accommodations not only for all the Spaniards, says Cortés, but for twice their number.²⁹ He gave orders, on his arrival, that all regard should be paid to the persons and property of the citizens, and forbade any Spaniard to leave his quarters, under pain of death.

His commands were not effectual to suppress some excesses of his Indian allies, if the report of the Tezcucan chronicler be correct, who states that the Tlascalans burned down one of the royal palaces soon after their arrival. It was the depository of the national archives; and the conflagration, however it may have occurred, may well be deplored by the antiquary, who might have found in its hieroglyphic records some clue to the migrations of the mysterious races which first settled on the highlands of Anahuac.³⁰

Alarmed at the apparent desertion of the place,

²⁹ "La qual es tan grande, que aunque fuéramos doblados los Españoles, nos pudieramos aposentar bien á placer en ella." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 191.

³⁰ "De tal manera que se quemáron todos los Archivos Reales de toda la Nueva-España, que fué una de las mayores pérdidas que tuvo esta tierra, porque con esto toda la memoria de sus antiguayaz y otras cosas que eran como Escrituras y recuerdos pereciéron desde este tiempo. La obra de las Casas era la mejor y la mas artificiosa que hubo en esta tierra." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 91.

* [Nezahualcoytl. According to Ixtlilxochitl, the only authority on this point, it was the palace of Nezahualpilli that was burned by the Tlascalans soon after their arrival.—M.]

as well as by the fact that none of its principal inhabitants came to welcome him, Cortés ordered some soldiers to ascend the neighboring *teocalli* and survey the city. They soon returned with the report that the inhabitants were leaving it in great numbers, with their families and effects, some in canoes upon the lake, others on foot towards the mountains. The general now comprehended the import of the cacique's suggestion that the Spaniards should pass the night in the suburbs,—in order to secure time for evacuating the city. He feared that the chief himself might have fled. He lost no time in detaching troops to secure the principal avenues, where they were to turn back the fugitives, and arrest the cacique, if he were among the number. But it was too late. Coanaco was already far on his way across the lake to Mexico.

Cortés now determined to turn this event to his own account, by placing another ruler on the throne, who should be more subservient to his interests. He called a meeting of the few principal persons still remaining in the city, and, by their advice and ostensible election, advanced a brother of the late sovereign to the dignity, which they declared vacant. This prince, who consented to be baptized, was a willing instrument in the hands of the Spaniards. He survived but a few months,³¹

³¹ The historian Ixtlilxochitl pays the following high tribute to the character of his royal kinsman, whose name was Tecocol. Strange that this name is not to be found—with the exception of Sahagun's work—in any contemporary record! "Fué el primero que lo fué en Tezcoco, con harta pena de los Españoles, porque fué nobilísimo y los quiso mucho. Fué D. Fernando Tecocoltzín muy gentil hombre, alto de cuerpo y muy blanco, tanto quanto podia ser cualquier Español por muy blanco que fuese, y que mostraba su persona y término

and was succeeded by another member of the royal house, named Ixtlilxochitl, who, indeed, as general of his armies, may be said to have held the reins of government in his hands during his brother's lifetime. As this person was intimately associated with the Spaniards in their subsequent operations, to the success of which he essentially contributed, it is proper to give some account of his early history, which, in truth, is as much enveloped in the marvellous as that of any fabulous hero of antiquity.³²

He was son, by a second queen, of the great Nezahualpilli. Some alarming prodigies at his birth, and the gloomy aspect of the planets, led the astrologers who cast his horoscope to advise the king, his father, to take away the infant's life, since, if he lived to grow up, he was destined to unite with the enemies of his country and overturn its institutions and religion. But the old monarch

descender, y ser del linage que era. Supo la lengua Castellana, y así casi las mas noches despues de haber cenado, trataban él y Cortés de todo lo que se debia hacer acerca de las guerras." Ixtlilxochitl, *Venida de los Españoles*, pp. 12, 13.

³² The accession of Tecocol, as, indeed, his existence, passes unnoticed by some historians, and by others is mentioned in so equivocal a manner—his Indian name being omitted—that it is very doubtful if any other is intended than his younger brother Ixtlilxochitl. The Tezcucan chronicler bearing this last melodious name* has alone given the particulars of his history. I have followed him, as, from his personal connections, having had access to the best sources of information; though, it must be confessed, he is far too ready to take things on trust, to be always the best authority.

* [This name—"which," says Mr. Tylor, "sticks in the throats of readers of Prescott"—signifies "vanilla-face," being compounded of *ixtli*, face, and *tlilxochitl*, vanilla, the latter being itself a compound of *tlilli*, black, and *xochitl*, flower.—Buschmann, *Über die Aztekischen Ortsnamen*, S. 681.—K.]

replied, says the chronicler, that "the time had arrived when the sons of Quetzalcoatl were to come from the East to take possession of the land, and, if the Almighty had selected his child to co-operate with them in the work, His will be done." ³³

As the boy advanced in years, he exhibited a marvellous precocity not merely of talent, but of mischievous activity, which afforded an alarming prognostic for the future. When about twelve years old, he formed a little corps of followers of about his own age, or somewhat older, with whom he practised the military exercises of his nation, conducting mimic fights and occasionally assaulting the peaceful burghers and throwing the whole city as well as palace into uproar and confusion. Some of his father's ancient counsellors, connecting this conduct with the predictions at his birth, saw in it such alarming symptoms that they repeated the advice of the astrologers to take away the prince's life, if the monarch would not see his kingdom one day given up to anarchy. This unpleasant advice was reported to the juvenile offender, who was so much exasperated by it that he put himself at the head of a party of his young desperadoes, and, entering the houses of the offending counsellors, dragged them forth and administered to them the *garrote*,—the mode in which capital punishment was inflicted in Tezcuco.

³³ "Él respondió, que era por demas ir contra lo determinado por el Dios Criador de todas las cosas, pues no sin misterio y secreto juicio suyo le daba tal Hijo al tiempo y quando se acercaban las profecías de sus Antepasados, que havíase venir nuevas Gentes á poseer la Tierra, como eran los Hijos de Quetzalcoatl que aguardaban su venida de la parte oriental." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 69.

He was seized and brought before his father. When questioned as to his extraordinary conduct, he coolly replied "that he had done no more than he had a right to do. The guilty ministers had deserved their fate, by endeavoring to alienate his father's affections from him, for no other reason than his too great fondness for the profession of arms,—the most honorable profession in the state, and the one most worthy of a prince. If they had suffered death, it was no more than they had intended for him." The wise Nezahualpilli, says the chronicler, found much force in these reasons; and, as he saw nothing low and sordid in the action, but rather the ebullition of a daring spirit, which in after-life might lead to great things, he contented himself with bestowing a grave admonition on the juvenile culprit.³⁴ Whether this admonition had any salutary effect on his subsequent demeanor, we are not informed. It is said, however, that as he grew older he took an active part in the wars of his country, and, when no more than seventeen, had won for himself the insignia of a valiant and victorious captain.³⁵

³⁴ "Con que el Rey no supo con que ocacion poderle castigar, porque lo parecieron sus razones tan vivas y fundadas que su parte no habia hecho cosa indebida ni vileza para poder ser castigado, mas tan solo una ferocidad de ánimo; pronóstico de lo mucho que habia de venir á saber por las Armas, y así el Rey dijo, que se fuese á la mano." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 69.

³⁵ Ibid., ubi supra.—Among other anecdotes recorded of the young prince's early development is one of his having, when only three years old, pitched his nurse into a well, as she was drawing water, to punish her for certain improprieties of conduct of which he had been witness. But I spare the reader the recital of these astonishing proofs of precocity, as it is very probable his appetite for the marvellous may not keep pace with that of the chronicler of Tezcuco.

On his father's death, he disputed the succession with his elder brother, Cacama. The country was menaced with a civil war, when the affair was compromised by his brother's ceding to him that portion of his territories which lay among the mountains. On the arrival of the Spaniards, the young chieftain—for he was scarcely twenty years of age—made, as we have seen, many friendly demonstrations towards them, induced, no doubt, by his hatred of Montezuma, who had supported the pretensions of Cacama.³⁶ It was not, however, till his advancement to the lordship of Tezcuco that he showed the full extent of his good will. From that hour he became the fast friend of the Christians, supporting them with his personal authority and the whole strength of his military array and resources, which, although much shorn of their ancient splendor since the days of his father, were still considerable, and made him a most valuable ally. His important services have been gratefully commemorated by the Castilian historians; and history should certainly not defraud him of his just meed of glory,—the melancholy glory of having contributed more than any other chieftain of Anahuac to rivet the chains of the white man round the necks of his countrymen.

³⁶ *Ante*, vol. ii., p. 8.

The two pillars on which the story of the Conquest mainly rests are the Chronicles of Gomara and of Bernal Diaz, two individuals having as little resemblance to each other as the courtly and cultivated churchman has to the unlettered soldier.

The first of these, Francisco Lopez de Gomara, was a native of Seville. On the return of Cortés to Spain after the Conquest, Gomara became his chaplain, and on his patron's death continued in

the service of his son, the second Marquis of the Valley. It was then that he wrote his Chronicle; and the circumstances under which it was produced might lead one to conjecture that the narrative would not be conducted on the strict principles of historic impartiality. Nor would such a conjecture be without foundation. The history of the Conquest is necessarily that of the great man who achieved it. But Gomara has thrown his hero's character into so bold relief that it has entirely overshadowed that of his brave companions in arms; and, while he has tenderly drawn the veil over the infirmities of his favorite, he is ever studious to display his exploits in the full blaze of panegyric. His situation may in some degree excuse his partiality. But it did not vindicate him in the eyes of the honest Las Casas, who seldom concludes a chapter of his own narrative of the Conquest without administering a wholesome castigation to Gomara. He even goes so far as to tax the chaplain with "downright falsehood," assuring us "that he had neither eyes nor ears but for what his patron chose to dictate to him." That this is not literally true is evident from the fact that the narrative was not written till several years after the death of Cortés. Indeed, Gomara derived his information from the highest sources; not merely from his patron's family, but also from the most distinguished actors in the great drama, with whom his position in society placed him in intimate communication.

The materials thus obtained he arranged with a symmetry little understood by the chroniclers of the time. Instead of their rambling incoherencies, his style displays an elegant brevity; it is as clear as it is concise. If the facts are somewhat too thickly crowded on the reader, and occupy the mind too busily for reflection, they at least all tend to a determinate point, and the story, instead of dragging its slow length along till our patience and interest are exhausted, steadily maintains its onward march. In short, the execution of the work is not only superior to that of most contemporary narratives, but, to a certain extent, may aspire to the rank of a classical composition.

Owing to these circumstances, Gomara's History soon obtained general circulation and celebrity; and, while many a letter of Cortés, and the more elaborate compositions of Oviedo and Las Casas, were suffered to slumber in manuscript, Gomara's writings were printed and reprinted in his own day, and translated into various languages of Europe. The first edition of the *Crónica de la Nueva-España* appeared at Medina, in 1553; it was republished at Antwerp the following year. It has since been incorporated in Barcia's collection, and lastly, in 1826, made its appearance on this side of the water from the Mexican press. The circumstances attending this last edition are curious. The Mexican government appropriated a small sum to defray the expense of translating what was supposed to be an original chronicle of Chimalpain, an Indian writer who lived at the close of the sixteenth century. The care of the translation was committed to the laborious Bustamante. But this

scholar had not proceeded far in his labor when he ascertained that the supposed original was itself an Aztec translation of Gomara's Chronicle. He persevered, however, in his editorial labors, until he had given to the public an American edition of Gomara. It is a fact more remarkable that the editor in his different compilations constantly refers to this same work as the Chronicle of Chimalpain.

The other authority to which I have adverted is Bernal Diaz del Castillo, a native of Medina del Campo in Old Castile. He was born of a poor and humble family, and in 1514 came over to seek his fortunes in the New World. He embarked as a common soldier under Cordova in the first expedition to Yucatan. He accompanied Grijalva in the following year to the same quarter, and finally enlisted under the banner of Cortés. He followed this victorious chief in his first march up the great plateau; descended with him to make the assault on Narvaez; shared the disasters of the *noche triste*; and was present at the siege and surrender of the capital. In short, there was scarcely an event or an action of importance in the whole war in which he did not bear a part. He was engaged in a hundred and nineteen different battles and rencontres, in several of which he was wounded, and in more than one narrowly escaped falling into the enemy's hands. In all these Bernal Diaz displayed the old Castilian valor, and a loyalty which made him proof against the mutinous spirit that too often disturbed the harmony of the camp. On every occasion he was found true to his commander and to the cause in which he was embarked. And his fidelity is attested not only by his own report, but by the emphatic commendations of his general; who selected him on this account for offices of trust and responsibility, which furnished the future chronicler with access to the best means of information in respect to the Conquest.

On the settlement of the country, Bernal Diaz received his share of the *repartimientos* of land and laborers. But the arrangement was not to his satisfaction; and he loudly murmurs at the selfishness of his commander, too much engrossed by the care for his own emoluments to think of his followers. The division of spoil is usually an unthankful office. Diaz had been too long used to a life of adventure to be content with one of torpid security. He took part in several expeditions conducted by the captains of Cortés, and he accompanied that chief in his terrible passage through the forests of Honduras. At length, in 1568, we find the veteran established as regidor of the city of Guatemala, peacefully employed in recounting the valorous achievements of his youth. It was then nearly half a century after the Conquest. He had survived his general and nearly all his ancient companions in arms. Five only remained of that gallant band who had accompanied Cortés on his expedition from Cuba; and those five, to borrow the words of the old chronicler, were "poor, aged, and infirm, with children and grandchildren looking to them for support, but with scarcely the means of affording

it,—ending their days, as they had begun them, in toil and trouble.” Such was the fate of the Conquerors of golden Mexico.

The motives which induced Bernal Diaz to take up his pen at so late a period of life were to vindicate for himself and his comrades that share of renown in the Conquest which fairly belonged to them. Of this they had been deprived, as he conceived, by the exaggerated reputation of their general; owing, no doubt, in part, to the influence of Gomara’s writings. It was not, however, till he had advanced beyond the threshold of his own work that Diaz met with that of the chaplain. The contrast presented by his own homely diction to the clear and polished style of his predecessor filled him with so much disgust that he threw down his pen in despair. But, when he had read further, and saw the gross inaccuracies and what he deemed disregard of truth in his rival, he resumed his labors, determined to exhibit to the world a narrative which should at least have the merit of fidelity. Such was the origin of the *Historia verdadera de la Conquista de la Nueva-España*.

The chronicler may be allowed to have succeeded in his object. In reading his pages, we feel that, whatever are the errors into which he has fallen, from oblivion of ancient transactions, or from unconscious vanity,—of which he had full measure,—or from credulity, or any other cause, there is nowhere a wilful perversion of truth. Had he attempted it, indeed, his very simplicity would have betrayed him. Even in relation to Cortés, while he endeavors to adjust the true balance between his pretensions and those of his followers, and while he freely exposes his cunning or cupidity, and sometimes his cruelty, he does ample justice to his great and heroic qualities. With all his defects, it is clear that he considers his own chief as superior to any other of ancient or modern times. In the heat of remonstrance, he is ever ready to testify his loyalty and personal attachment. When calumnies assail his commander, or he experiences unmerited slight or indignity, the loyal chronicler is prompt to step forward and shield him. In short, it is evident that, however much he may at times censure Cortés, he will allow no one else to do it.

Bernal Diaz, the untutored child of nature, is a most true and literal copyist of nature. He transfers the scenes of real life by a sort of *daguerreotype* process, if I may so say, to his pages. He is among chroniclers what De Foe is among novelists. He introduces us into the heart of the camp, we huddle round the bivouac with the soldiers, loiter with them on their wearisome marches, listen to their stories, their murmurs of discontent, their plans of conquest, their hopes, their triumphs, their disappointments. All the picturesque scenes and romantic incidents of the campaign are reflected in his page as in a mirror. The lapse of fifty years has had no power over the spirit of the veteran. The fire of youth glows in every line of his rude history; and, as he calls up the scenes of the past, the remembrance of the brave companions who are gone gives, it may be, a warmer coloring to the picture than if it had been made at an

earlier period. Time, and reflection, and the apprehensions for the future, which might steal over the evening of life, have no power over the settled opinions of his earlier days. He has no misgivings as to the right of conquest, or as to the justice of the severities inflicted on the natives. He is still the soldier of the Cross; and those who fell by his side in the fight were martyrs for the faith. "Where are now my companions?" he asks; "they have fallen in battle or been devoured by the cannibal, or been thrown to fatten the wild beasts in their cages! they whose remains should rather have been gathered under monuments emblazoned with their achievements, which deserve to be commemorated in letters of gold; for they died in the service of God and of his Majesty, and to give light to those who sat in darkness,—and also to acquire that *wealth which most men covet*." The last motive—thus tardily and incidentally expressed—may be thought by some to furnish a better key than either of the preceding to the conduct of the Conquerors. It is, at all events, a specimen of that *naïveté* which gives an irresistible charm to the old chronicler, and which, in spite of himself, unlocks his bosom, as it were, and lays it open to the eye of the reader.

It may seem extraordinary that after so long an interval, the incidents of his campaigns should have been so freshly remembered. But we must consider that they were of the most strange and romantic character, well fitted to make an impression on a young and susceptible imagination. They had probably been rehearsed by the veteran again and again to his family and friends, until every passage of the war was as familiar to his mind as the "tale of Troy" to the Greek rhapsodist, or the interminable adventures of Sir Lancelot or Sir Gawain to the Norman minstrel. The throwing of his narrative into the form of chronicle was but repeating it once more.

The literary merits of the work are of a very humble order; as might be expected from the condition of the writer. He has not even the art to conceal his own vulgar vanity, which breaks out with a truly comic ostentation in every page of the narrative. And yet we should have charity for this, when we find that it is attended with no disposition to depreciate the merits of others, and that its display may be referred in part to the singular simplicity of the man. He honestly confesses his infirmity, though, indeed, to excuse it. "When my chronicle was finished," he says, "I submitted it to two licentiates, who were desirous of reading the story, and for whom I felt all the respect which an ignorant man naturally feels for a scholar. I besought them, at the same time, to make no change or correction in the manuscript, as all there was set down in good faith. When they had read the work, they much commended me for my wonderful memory. The language, they said, was good old Castilian, without any of the flourishes and finicalities so much affected by our fine writers. But they remarked that it would have been as well if I had not praised myself and my comrades so liberally, but had left

that to others. To this I answered that it was common for neighbors and kindred to speak kindly of one another; and, if we did not speak well of ourselves, who would? Who else witnessed our exploits and our battles,—unless, indeed, the clouds in the sky, and the birds that were flying over our heads?”

Notwithstanding the liberal encomiums passed by the licentiate on our author's style, it is of a very homely texture, abounding in colloquial barbarisms, and seasoned occasionally by the piquant sallies of the camp. It has the merit, however, of clearly conveying the writer's thoughts, and is well suited to their simple character. His narrative is put together with even less skill than is usual among his craft, and abounds in digressions and repetitions, such as vulgar gossips are apt to use in telling their stories. But it is superfluous to criticise a work by the rules of art which was written manifestly in total ignorance of those rules, and which, however we may criticise it, will be read and re-read by the scholar and the schoolboy, while the compositions of more classic chroniclers sleep undisturbed on their shelves.

In what, then, lies the charm of the work? In that spirit of truth which pervades it; which shows us situations as they were, and sentiments as they really existed in the heart of the writer. It is this which imparts a living interest to his story, and which is more frequently found in the productions of the untutored penman solely intent upon facts, than in those of the ripe and fastidious scholar occupied with the mode of expressing them.

It was by a mere chance that this inimitable chronicle was rescued from the oblivion into which so many works of higher pretensions have fallen in the Peninsula. For more than sixty years after its composition the manuscript lay concealed in the obscurity of a private library, when it was put into the hands of Father Alonso Remon, Chronicler-General of the Order of Mercy. He had the sagacity to discover, under its rude exterior, its high value in illustrating the history of the Conquest. He obtained a license for the publication of the work, and under his auspices it appeared at Madrid in 1632,—the edition used in the preparation of these volumes.

BOOK VI

SIEGE AND SURRENDER OF MEXICO

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SIEGE AND SURRENDER OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I

ARRANGEMENTS AT TEZCUCO—SACK OF IZTAPALAPAN—ADVANTAGES OF THE SPANIARDS—WISE POLICY OF CORTÉS—TRANSPORTATION OF THE BRIGANTINES

1521

THE city of Tezcucó was the best position, probably, which Cortés could have chosen for the headquarters of the army. It supplied all the accommodations for lodging a numerous body of troops, and all the facilities for subsistence, incident to a large and populous town.¹ It furnished, moreover, a multitude of artisans and laborers for the uses of the army. Its territories, bordering on the Tlascalán, afforded a ready means of intercourse with the country of his allies; while its vicinity to Mexico enabled the general, without much difficulty, to ascertain the movements

¹ “Así mismo hizo juntar todos los bastimentos que fueron necesarios para sustentar el Ejército y Guarniciones de Gente que andaban en favor de Cortés, y así hizo traer á la Ciudad de Tezcucó el Maíz que había en las Troxes y Graneros de las Provincias sujetas al Reyno de Tezcucó.” Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 91.

in that capital. Its central situation, in short, opened facilities for communication with all parts of the Valley, and made it an excellent *point d'appui* for his future operations.

The first care of Cortés was to strengthen himself in the palace assigned to him, and to place his quarters in a state of defence which might secure them against surprise not only from the Mexicans, but from the Tezcucans themselves. Since the election of their new ruler, a large part of the population had returned to their homes, assured of protection in person and property. But the Spanish general, notwithstanding their show of submission, very much distrusted its sincerity; for he knew that many of them were united too intimately with the Aztecs, by marriage and other social relations, not to have their sympathies engaged in their behalf.² The young monarch, however, seemed wholly in his interests; and, to secure him more effectually, Cortés placed several Spaniards near his person, whose ostensible province it was to instruct him in their language and religion, but who were in reality to watch over his conduct and prevent his correspondence with those who might be unfriendly to the Spanish interests.³

Tezcuco stood about half a league from the lake. It would be necessary to open a communication with it, so that the brigantines, when put together in the capital, might be launched upon its waters.

² "No era de espantar que tuviese este recelo, porque sus Enemigos, y los de esta Ciudad eran todos Deudos y Parientes mas cercanos, mas despues el tiempo lo desengañó, y vido la gran lealtad de Ixtlilxochitl, y de todos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 92.

³ Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 137.

It was proposed, therefore, to dig a canal reaching from the gardens of Nezahualcoyotl, as they were called, from the old monarch who planned them, to the edge of the basin. A little stream, or rivulet, which flowed in that direction, was to be deepened sufficiently for the purpose; and eight thousand Indian laborers were forthwith employed on this great work, under the direction of the young Ixtlilxochitl.⁴

Meanwhile, Cortés received messages from several places in the neighborhood, intimating their desire to become the vassals of his sovereign and to be taken under his protection. The Spanish commander required, in return, that they should deliver up every Mexican who should set foot in their territories. Some noble Aztecs, who had been sent on a mission to these towns, were consequently delivered into his hands. He availed himself of it to employ them as bearers of a message to their master the emperor. In it he deprecated the necessity of the present hostilities. Those who had most injured him, he said, were no longer among the living. He was willing to forget the past, and invited the Mexicans, by a timely submission, to save their capital from the horrors of a siege.⁵ Cortés had no expectation of producing any immediate result by this appeal. But he thought it might lie in the minds of the Mexicans, and that, if there was a

⁴ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 91.

⁵ “Los principales, que habian sido en hacerme la Guerra pasada, eran ya muertos; y que lo pasado fuesse pasado, y que no quisiessen dar causa á que destruyesse sus Tierras, y Ciudades, porque me pesaba mucho de ello.” *Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 193.

party among them disposed to treat with him, it might afford them encouragement, as showing his own willingness to co-operate with their views. At this time, however, there was no division of opinion in the capital. The whole population seemed animated by a spirit of resistance, as one man.

In a former page I have mentioned that it was the plan of Cortés, on entering the Valley, to commence operations by reducing the subordinate cities before striking at the capital itself, which, like some goodly tree whose roots had been severed one after another, would be thus left without support against the fury of the tempest. The first point of attack which he selected was the ancient city of Iztapalapan; a place containing fifty thousand inhabitants, according to his own account, and situated about six leagues distant, on the narrow tongue of land which divides the waters of the great salt lake from those of the fresh. It was the private domain of the last sovereign of Mexico; where, as the reader may remember, he entertained the white men the night before their entrance into the capital, and astonished them by the display of his princely gardens. To this monarch they owed no good will, for he had conducted the operations on the *noche triste*. He was, indeed, no more; but the people of his city entered heartily into his hatred of the strangers, and were now the most loyal vassals of the Mexican crown.

In a week after his arrival at his new quarters, Cortés, leaving the command of the garrison to Sandoval, marched against this Indian city, at the head of two hundred Spanish foot, eighteen horse,

and between three and four thousand Tlascalans. Their route lay along the eastern border of the lake, gemmed with many a bright town and hamlet, or, unlike its condition at the present day, darkened with overhanging groves of cypress and cedar, and occasionally opening a broad expanse to their view, with the Queen of the Valley rising gloriously from the waters, as if proudly conscious of her supremacy over the fair cities around her. Farther on, the eye ranged along the dark line of causeway connecting Mexico with the main land, and suggesting many a bitter recollection to the Spaniards.

They quickened their step, and had advanced within two leagues of their point of destination, when they were encountered by a strong Aztec force drawn up to dispute their progress. Cortés instantly gave them battle. The barbarians showed their usual courage, but, after some hard fighting, were compelled to give way before the steady valor of the Spanish infantry, backed by the desperate fury of the Tlascalans, whom the sight of an Aztec seemed to inflame almost to madness. The enemy retreated in disorder, closely followed by the Spaniards. When they had arrived within half a league of Iztapalapan, they observed a number of canoes filled with Indians, who appeared to be laboring on the mole which hemmed in the waters of the salt lake. Swept along in the tide of pursuit, they gave little heed to it, but, following up the chase, entered pell-mell with the fugitives into the city.

The houses stood some of them on dry ground,

some on piles in the water. The former were deserted by the inhabitants, most of whom had escaped in canoes across the lake, leaving, in their haste, their effects behind them. The Tlascalans poured at once into the vacant dwellings and loaded themselves with booty; while the enemy, making the best of their way through this part of the town, sought shelter in the buildings erected over the water, or among the reeds which sprung from its shallow bottom. In the houses were many of the citizens also, who still lingered with their wives and children, unable to find the means of transporting themselves from the scene of danger.

Cortés, supported by his own men, and by such of the allies as could be brought to obey his orders, attacked the enemy in this last place of their retreat. Both parties fought up to their girdles in the water. A desperate struggle ensued; as the Aztec fought with the fury of a tiger driven to bay by the huntsmen. It was all in vain. The enemy was overpowered in every quarter. The citizen shared the fate of the soldier, and a pitiless massacre succeeded, without regard to sex or age. Cortés endeavored to stop it. But it would have been as easy to call away the starving wolf from the carcass he was devouring, as the Tlascalan who had once tasted the blood of an enemy. More than six thousand, including women and children, according to the Conqueror's own statement, perished in the conflict.⁶

⁶ "Muriéron de ellos mas de seis mil ánimas, entre Hombres, y Mugeres, y Niños; porque los Indios nuestros Amigos, vista la Victoria, que Dios nos daba, no entendian en otra cosa, sino en matar á diestro y á siniestro." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 195.

Darkness meanwhile had set in; but it was dispelled in some measure by the light of the burning houses, which the troops had set on fire, in different parts of the town. Their insulated position, it is true, prevented the flames from spreading from one building to another, but the solitary masses threw a strong and lurid glare over their own neighborhood, which gave additional horror to the scene. As resistance was now at an end, the soldiers abandoned themselves to pillage, and soon stripped the dwellings of every portable article of any value.

While engaged in this work of devastation, a murmuring sound was heard as of the hoarse rippling of waters, and a cry soon arose among the Indians that the dikes were broken! Cortés now comprehended the business of the men whom he had seen in the canoes at work on the mole which fenced in the great basin of Lake Tezcuco.⁷ It had been pierced by the desperate Indians, who thus laid the country under an inundation, by suffering the waters of the salt lake to spread themselves over the lower level, through the opening. Greatly alarmed, the general called his men together, and made all haste to evacuate the city. Had they remained three hours longer, he says, not a soul could have escaped.⁸ They came stag-

⁷ "Estándolas quemando, pareció que Nuestro Señor me inspiró, y trujo á la memoria la Calzada, ó Presa, que habia visto rota en el Camino, y representóseme el gran daño, que era." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, loc. cit.

⁸ "Y certifico á Vuestra Magestad, que si aquella noche no pasaramos el Agua, ó aguardaramos tres horas mas, que ninguno de nosotros escapara, porque quedabamos cercados de Agua, sin tener paso por parte ninguna." Ibid., ubi supra.

gering under the weight of booty, wading with difficulty through the water, which was fast gaining upon them. For some distance their path was illumined by the glare of the burning buildings. But, as the light faded away in the distance, they wandered with uncertain steps, sometimes up to their knees, at others up to their waists, in the water, through which they floundered on with the greatest difficulty. As they reached the opening in the dike, the stream became deeper, and flowed out with such a current that the men were unable to maintain their footing. The Spaniards, breasting the flood, forced their way through; but many of the Indians, unable to swim, were borne down by the waters. All the plunder was lost. The powder was spoiled; the arms and clothes of the soldiers were saturated with the brine, and the cold night-wind, as it blew over them, benumbed their weary limbs till they could scarcely drag them along. At dawn they beheld the lake swarming with canoes, full of Indians, who had anticipated their disaster, and who now saluted them with showers of stones, arrows, and other deadly missiles. Bodies of light troops, hovering in the distance, disquieted the flanks of the army in like manner. The Spaniards had no desire to close with the enemy. They only wished to regain their comfortable quarters in Tezcuco, where they arrived on the same day, more disconsolate and fatigued than after many a long march and hard-fought battle.⁹

⁹ The general's own Letter to the emperor is so full and precise that it is the very best authority for this event. The story is told

The close of the expedition, so different from its brilliant commencement, greatly disappointed Cortés. His numerical loss had, indeed, not been great; but this affair convinced him how much he had to apprehend from the resolution of a people who, with a spirit worthy of the ancient Hollanders, were prepared to bury their country under water rather than to submit. Still, the enemy had little cause for congratulation; since, independently of the number of slain, they had seen one of their most flourishing cities sacked, and in part, at least, laid in ruins,—one of those, too, which in its public works displayed the nearest approach to civilization. Such are the triumphs of war!

The expedition of Cortés, notwithstanding the disasters which checkered it, was favorable to the Spanish cause. The fate of Iztapalapan struck a terror throughout the Valley. The consequences were soon apparent in the deputations sent by the different places eager to offer their submission. Its influence was visible, indeed, beyond the mountains. Among others, the people of Otumba, the town near which the Spaniards had gained their famous victory, sent to tender their allegiance and to request the protection of the powerful strangers. They excused themselves, as usual, for the part they had taken in the late hostilities, by throwing the blame on the Aztecs.

But the place of most importance which thus claimed their protection was Chalco, situated on

also by Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 138.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 18,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 92,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 2, et auct. aliis.

the eastern extremity of the lake of that name. It was an ancient city, peopled by a kindred tribe of the Aztecs, and once their formidable rival. The Mexican emperor, distrusting their loyalty, had placed a garrison within their walls to hold them in check. The rulers of the city now sent a message secretly to Cortés, proposing to put themselves under his protection, if he would enable them to expel the garrison.

The Spanish commander did not hesitate, but instantly detached a considerable force under Sandoval for this object. On the march, his rear-guard, composed of Tlascalans, was roughly handled by some light troops of the Mexicans. But he took his revenge in a pitched battle which took place with the main body of the enemy at no great distance from Chalco. They were drawn up on a level ground, covered with green crops of maize and maguey. The field is traversed by the road which at this day leads from the last-mentioned city to Tezcucó.¹⁰ Sandoval, charging the enemy at the head of his cavalry, threw them into disorder. But they quickly rallied, formed again, and renewed the battle with greater spirit than ever. In a second attempt he was more fortunate; and, breaking through their lines by a desperate onset, the brave cavalier succeeded, after a warm but ineffectual struggle on their part, in completely routing and driving them from the field. The conquering army continued its march to Chalco, which the Mexican garrison had already evacuated, and was received in triumph by the as-

¹⁰ Lorenzana, p. 199, nota.

sembled citizens, who seemed eager to testify their gratitude for their deliverance from the Aztec yoke. After taking such measures as he could for the permanent security of the place, Sandoval returned to Tezcuco, accompanied by the two young lords of the city, sons of the late cacique.

They were courteously received by Cortés; and they informed him that their father had died, full of years, a short time before. With his last breath he had expressed his regret that he should not have lived to see Malinche. He believed that the white men were the beings predicted by the oracles as one day to come from the East and take possession of the land;¹¹ and he enjoined it on his children, should the strangers return to the Valley, to render them their homage and allegiance. The young caciques expressed their readiness to do so; but, as this must bring on them the vengeance of the Aztecs, they implored the general to furnish a sufficient force for their protection.¹²

Cortés received a similar application from various other towns, which were disposed, could they do so with safety, to throw off the Mexican yoke. But he was in no situation to comply with their request. He now felt more sensibly than ever the incompetency of his means to his undertaking. "I assure your Majesty," he writes in his letter to the emperor, "the greatest uneasiness which I feel,

¹¹ "Porque ciertamente sus antepassados les auian dicho, que auian de señorear aquellas tierras hombres que vernian con barbas de hazia donde sale el Sol, y que por las cosas que han visto, eramos nosotros." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 139.

¹² *Ibid.*, ubi supra.—*Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 200.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 122.—*Venida de los Españoles*, p. 15.

after all my labors and fatigues, is from my inability to succor and support our Indian friends, your Majesty's loyal vassals." ¹³ Far from having a force competent to this, he had scarcely enough for his own protection. His vigilant enemy had an eye on all his movements, and, should he cripple his strength by sending away too many detachments or by employing them at too great a distance, would be prompt to take advantage of it. His only expeditions, hitherto, had been in the neighborhood, where the troops, after striking some sudden and decisive blow, might speedily regain their quarters. The utmost watchfulness was maintained there, and the Spaniards lived in as constant preparation for an assault as if their camp was pitched under the walls of Mexico.

On two occasions the general had sallied forth and engaged the enemy in the environs of Tezcuco. At one time a thousand canoes filled with Aztecs, crossed the lake to gather in a large crop of Indian corn, nearly ripe, on its borders. Cortés thought it important to secure this for himself. He accordingly marched out and gave battle to the enemy, drove them from the field, and swept away the rich harvest to the granaries of Tezcuco. Another time a strong body of Mexicans had established themselves in some neighboring towns friendly to their interests. Cortés, again sallying, dislodged them from their quarters, beat them in

¹³ "Y certifico á Vuestra Magestad, allende de nuestro trabajo y necesidad, la mayor fatiga, que tenia, era no poder ayudar, y socorrer á los Indios nuestros Amigos, que por ser Vasallos de Vuestra Magestad, eran molestados y trabajados de los de Culúa." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 204.

several skirmishes, and reduced the places to obedience. But these enterprises demanded all his resources, and left him nothing to spare for his allies. In this exigency, his fruitful genius suggested an expedient for supplying the deficiency of his means.

Some of the friendly cities without the Valley, observing the numerous beacon-fires on the mountains, inferred that the Mexicans were mustering in great strength, and that the Spaniards must be hard pressed in their new quarters. They sent messengers to Tezcucó, expressing their apprehension, and offering reinforcements, which the general, when he set out on his march, had declined. He returned many thanks for the proffered aid; but, while he declined it for himself, as unnecessary, he indicated in what manner their services might be effectual for the defence of Chalco and the other places which had invoked his protection. But his Indian allies were in deadly feud with these places, whose inhabitants had too often fought under the Aztec banner not to have been engaged in repeated wars with the people beyond the mountains.

Cortés set himself earnestly to reconcile these differences. He told the hostile parties that they should be willing to forget their mutual wrongs, since they had entered into new relations. They were now vassals of the same sovereign, engaged in a common enterprise against the formidable foe who had so long trodden them in the dust. Singly they could do little, but united they might protect each other's weakness and hold their enemy at bay

till the Spaniards could come to their assistance. These arguments finally prevailed; and the politic general had the satisfaction to see the high-spirited and hostile tribes forego their long-cherished rivalry, and, resigning the pleasures of revenge, so dear to the barbarian, embrace one another as friends and champions in a common cause. To this wise policy the Spanish commander owed quite as much of his subsequent success as to his arms.¹⁴

Thus the foundations of the Mexican empire were hourly loosening, as the great vassals around the capital, on whom it most relied, fell off one after another from their allegiance. The Aztecs, properly so called, formed but a small part of the population of the Valley. This was principally composed of cognate tribes, members of the same great family of the Nahuatlacs who had come upon the plateau at nearly the same time. They were mutual rivals, and were reduced one after another by the more warlike Mexican, who held them in subjection, often by open force, always by fear. Fear was the great principle of cohesion which bound together the discordant members of the monarchy; and this was now fast dissolving before the influence of a power more mighty than that of the Aztec. This, it is true, was not the first time that the conquered races had attempted to recover their independence. But all such attempts had failed for want of concert. It was reserved for the commanding genius of Cortés to extinguish their old hereditary feuds, and, combining their

¹⁴ Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 204, 205.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 19.

scattered energies, to animate them with a common principle of action.¹⁵

Encouraged by this state of things, the Spanish general thought it a favorable moment to press his negotiations with the capital. He availed himself of the presence of some noble Mexicans, taken in the late action with Sandoval, to send another message to their master. It was in substance a repetition of the first, with a renewed assurance that, if the city would return to its allegiance to the Spanish crown, the authority of Guatemozin should be confirmed and the persons and property of his subjects be respected. To this communication no reply was made. The young Indian emperor had a spirit as dauntless as that of Cortés himself. On his head descended the full effects of that vicious system of government bequeathed to him by his ancestors. But, as he saw his empire crumbling be-

¹⁵ Oviedo, in his admiration of his hero, breaks out into the following panegyric on his policy, prudence, and military science, which, as he truly predicts, must make his name immortal. It is a fair specimen of the manner of the sagacious old chronicler. "Sin dubda alguna la habilidad y esfuerso, é prudencia de Hernando Cortés mui dignas son que entre los cavalleros, é gente militar en nuestros tiempos se tengan en mucha estimacion, y en los venideros nunca se desacuerden. Por causa suya me acuerdo muchas veces de aquellas cosas que se escriven del capitan Viriato nuestro Español y Estremño; y por Hernando Cortés me ocurren al sentido las muchas fatigas de aquel espejo de caballería Julio César dictador, como parece por sus comentarios, é por Suetonio é Plutarco é otros autores que en conformidad escriviéron los grandes hechos suyos. Pero los de Hernando Cortés en un Mundo nuevo, é tan apartadas provincias de Europa, é con tantos trabajos é necesidades é pocas fuerzas, é con gente tan innumerable, é tan bárbara é bellicosa, é apacentada en carne humana, é aun habida por excelente é sabroso manjar entre sus adversarios; é faltándole á él ó á sus milites el pan é vino é los otros mantenimientos todos de España, y en tan diferenciadas regiones é aires é tan desviado é léjos de socorro é de su príncipe, cosas son de admiracion." Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 20.

neath him, he sought to uphold it by his own energy and resources. He anticipated the defection of some vassals by establishing garrisons within their walls. Others he conciliated by exempting them from tributes or greatly lightening their burdens, or by advancing them to posts of honor and authority in the state. He showed, at the same time, his implacable animosity towards the Christians by commanding that every one taken within his dominions should be straightway sent to the capital, where he was sacrificed, with all the barbarous ceremonies prescribed by the Aztec ritual.¹⁶

¹⁶ Among other chiefs, to whom Guatemozin applied for assistance in the perilous state of his affairs, was Tangapan, lord of Michoacán, an independent and powerful state in the West, which had never been subdued by the Mexican army. The accounts which the Aztec emperor gave him, through his ambassadors, of the white men, were so alarming, according to Ixtlilxochitl, who tells the story, that the king's sister voluntarily starved herself to death, from her apprehensions of the coming of the terrible strangers. Her body was deposited, as usual, in the vaults reserved for the royal household, until preparations could be made for its being burnt. On the fourth day, the attendants who had charge of it were astounded by seeing the corpse exhibit signs of returning life. The restored princess, recovering her speech, requested her brother's presence. On his coming, she implored him not to think of hurting a hair of the heads of the mysterious visitors. She had been permitted, she said, to see the fate of the departed in the next world. The souls of all her ancestors she had beheld tossing about in unquenchable fire; while those who embraced the faith of the strangers were in glory. As a proof of the truth of her assertion, she added that her brother would see, on a great festival near at hand, a young warrior, armed with a torch brighter than the sun, in one hand, and a flaming sword, like that worn by the white men, in the other, passing from east to west over the city. Whether the monarch waited for the vision, or ever beheld it, is not told us by the historian. But, relying perhaps on the miracle of her resurrection as quite a sufficient voucher, he disbanded a very powerful force which he had assembled on the plains of Avalos for the support of his brother of Mexico. This narrative, with abundance of supernumerary incidents, not necessary to repeat, was commemorated in the Michoacán picture-records, and reported to the

While these occurrences were passing, Cortés received the welcome intelligence that the brigantines were completed and waiting to be transported to Tezcuco. He detached a body for the service, consisting of two hundred Spanish foot and fifteen horse, which he placed under the command of Sandoval. This cavalier had been rising daily in the estimation both of the general and of the army. Though one of the youngest officers in the service, he possessed a cool head and a ripe judgment, which fitted him for the most delicate and difficult undertakings. There were others, indeed, as Alvarado and Olid, for example, whose intrepidity made them equally competent to achieve a brilliant *coup-de-main*. But the courage of Alvarado was too often carried to temerity or perverted by passion; while Olid, dark and doubtful in his character, was not entirely to be trusted. Sandoval was a native of Medellin, the birthplace of Cortés himself. He was warmly attached to his commander, and had on all occasions proved himself worthy of his confidence. He was a man of few words, showing his worth rather by what he did than what he said. His honest, soldier-like deportment made him a favorite with the troops, and had its influence even on his enemies. He unfortunately died in the flower of his age. But he discovered talents and military skill which, had he

historian of Tezcuco himself by the grandson of Tangapan. (See Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 91.) Whoever reported it to him, it is not difficult to trace the same pious fingers in it which made so many wholesome legends for the good of the Church on the Old Continent, and which now found, in the credulity of the New, a rich harvest for the same godly work.

lived to later life, would undoubtedly have placed his name on the roll with those of the greatest captains of his nation.

Sandoval's route was to lead him by Zoltepec, a small city where the massacre of the forty-five Spaniards, already noticed, had been perpetrated. The cavalier received orders to find out the guilty parties, if possible, and to punish them for their share in the transaction.

When the Spaniards arrived at the spot, they found that the inhabitants, who had previous notice of their approach, had all fled. In the deserted temples they discovered abundant traces of the fate of their countrymen; for, besides their arms and clothing, and the hides of their horses, the heads of several soldiers, prepared in such a way that they could be well preserved, were found suspended as trophies of the victory. In a neighboring building, traced with charcoal on the walls, they found the following inscription in Castilian: "In this place the unfortunate Juan Juste, with many others of his company, was imprisoned."¹⁷ This hidalgo was one of the followers of Narvaez, and had come with him into the country in quest of gold, but had found, instead, an obscure and inglorious death. The eyes of the soldiers were suffused with tears as they gazed on the gloomy record, and their bosoms swelled with indignation as they thought of the horrible fate of the captives. Fortunately, the inhabitants were not then

¹⁷ "Aquí estuvo preso el sin ventura de Juã Iuste cō otros muchos que traía en mi compañía." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 140.

before them. Some few, who subsequently fell into their hands, were branded as slaves. But the greater part of the population, who threw themselves, in the most abject manner, on the mercy of the Conquerors, imputing the blame of the affair to the Aztecs, the Spanish commander spared, from pity, or contempt.¹⁸

He now resumed his march on Tlascala; but scarcely had he crossed the borders of the republic, when he descried the flaunting banners of the convoy which transported the brigantines, as it was threading its way through the defiles of the mountains. Great was his satisfaction at the spectacle, for he had feared a detention of some days at Tlascala before the preparations for the march could be completed.

There were thirteen vessels in all, of different sizes. They had been constructed under the direction of the experienced ship-builder, Martin Lopez, aided by three or four Spanish carpenters and the friendly natives, some of whom showed no mean degree of imitative skill. The brigantines, when completed, had been fairly tried on the waters of the Zahuapan. They were then taken to pieces, and, as Lopez was impatient of delay, the several parts, the timbers, anchors, iron-work, sails, and cordage, were placed on the shoulders of the *tamanes*, and, under a numerous military escort, were thus far advanced on the way to Tezcuco.¹⁹ San-

¹⁸ Ibid., ubi supra.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 19.—Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 206.

¹⁹ “Y despues de hechos por orden de Cortés, y probados en el rio que llaman de Tlaxcalla Zahuapan, que se atajó para probarlos los bergantines, y los tornáron á desbaratar por llevarlos á cuestras sobre

doval dismissed a part of the Indian convoy, as superfluous.

Twenty thousand warriors he retained, dividing them into two equal bodies for the protection of the *tamanes* in the centre.²⁰ His own little body of Spaniards he distributed in like manner. The Tlascalans in the van marched under the command of a chief who gloried in the name of Chichemecatl. For some reason Sandoval afterwards changed the order of march, and placed this division in the rear, —an arrangement which gave great umbrage to the doughty warrior that led it, who asserted his right to the front, the place which he and his ancestors had always occupied, as the post of danger. He was somewhat appeased by Sandoval's assurance that it was for that very reason he had been transferred to the rear, the quarter most likely to be assailed by the enemy. But even then he was greatly dissatisfied on finding that the Spanish commander was to march by his side, grudging, it would seem, that any other should share the laurel with himself.

Slowly and painfully, encumbered with their heavy burden, the troops worked their way over steep eminences and rough mountain-passes, presenting, one might suppose, in their long line of march, many a vulnerable point to an enemy. But,

hombros de los de Tlaxealla á la ciudad de Tetzeuco, donde se echáron en la laguna, y se armáron de artillería y municion." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

²⁰ Rel. Tere. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 207.—Bernal Diaz says sixteen thousand. (Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.) There is a wonderful agreement between the several Castilian writers as to the number of forces, the order of march, and the events that occurred on it.

although small parties of warriors were seen hovering at times on their flanks and rear, they kept at a respectful distance, not caring to encounter so formidable a foe. On the fourth day the warlike caravan arrived in safety before Tezcuco.

Their approach was beheld with joy by Cortés and the soldiers, who hailed it as the signal of a speedy termination of the war. The general, attended by his officers, all dressed in their richest attire, came out to welcome the convoy. It extended over a space of two leagues; and so slow was its progress that six hours elapsed before the closing files had entered the city.²¹ The Tlascalan chiefs displayed all their wonted bravery of apparel, and the whole array, composed of the flower of their warriors, made a brilliant appearance. They marched by the sound of atabal and cornet, and, as they traversed the streets of the capital amidst the acclamations of the soldiery, they made the city ring with the shouts of "Castile and Tlascala, long live our sovereign, the emperor!"²²

"It was a marvellous thing," exclaims the Conqueror, in his Letters, "that few have seen, or even heard of,—this transportation of thirteen vessels of war on the shoulders of men for nearly

²¹ "Estendíase tanto la Gente, que dende que los primeros comenzaron á entrar, hasta que los postreros hobiéron acabado, se pasaron mas de seis horas; sin quebrar el hilo de la Gente." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 208.

²² "Dando voces y silvos y diciendo: Viua, viua el Emperador, nuestro Señor, y Castilla, Castilla, y Tlascala, Tlascala." (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 140.) For the particulars of Sandoval's expedition, see, also, Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 19.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 124,—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 84,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 92,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 2.

twenty leagues across the mountains!"²³ It was, indeed, a stupendous achievement, and not easily matched in ancient or modern story; one which only a genius like that of Cortés could have devised, or a daring spirit like his have so successfully executed. Little did he foresee, when he ordered the destruction of the fleet which first brought him to the country, and with his usual forecast commanded the preservation of the iron-work and rigging,—little did he foresee the important uses for which they were to be reserved; so important, that on their preservation may be said to have depended the successful issue of his great enterprise.²⁴

He greeted his Indian allies with the greatest cordiality, testifying his sense of their services by those honors and attentions which he knew would be most grateful to their ambitious spirits. "We come," exclaimed the hardy warriors, "to fight

²³ "Que era cosa maravillosa de ver, y assí me parece que es de oír, llevar trece Fustas diez y ocho leguas por Tierra." (Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 207.) "En rem Romano populo," exclaims Martyr, "quando illustrius res illorum vigeant, non facilem!" De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 8.

²⁴ Two memorable examples of a similar transportation of vessels across the land are recorded, the one in ancient, the other in modern history; and both, singularly enough, at the same place, Tarentum, in Italy. The first occurred at the siege of that city by Hannibal (see Polybius, lib. 8); the latter some seventeen centuries later, by the Great Captain, Gonsalvo de Cordova. But the distance they were transported was inconsiderable. A more analogous example is that of Balboa, the bold discoverer of the Pacific. He made arrangements to have four brigantines transported a distance of twenty-two leagues across the Isthmus of Darien, a stupendous labor, and not entirely successful, as only two reached their point of destination. (See Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 2, cap. 11.) This took place in 1516, in the neighborhood, as it were, of Cortés, and may have suggested to his enterprising spirit the first idea of his own more successful, as well as more extensive, undertaking.

under your banner; to avenge our common quarrel, or to fall by your side;” and, with their usual impatience, they urged him to lead them at once against the enemy. “Wait,” replied the general, bluntly, “till you are rested, and you shall have your hands full.”²⁵

²⁵“Y ellos me dijéron, que trahian deseo de se ver con los de Culúa, y que viesse lo que mandaba, que ellos, y aquella Gente venian con deseos, y voluntad de se vengar, ó morir con nosotros: y yo les di las gracias, y les dije, que reposassen, y que presto les daria las manos llenas.” Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 208.

CHAPTER II

CORTÉS RECONNOITRES THE CAPITAL—OCCUPIES
TACUBA—SKIRMISHES WITH THE ENEMY—
EXPEDITION OF SANDOVAL—ARRIVAL OF REIN-
FORCEMENTS

1521

IN the course of three or four days, the Spanish general furnished the Tlascalans with the opportunity so much coveted, and allowed their boiling spirits to effervesce in active operations. He had for some time meditated an expedition to reconnoitre the capital and its environs, and to chastise, on the way, certain places which had sent him insulting messages of defiance and which were particularly active in their hostilities. He disclosed his design to a few only of his principal officers, from his distrust of the Tezcucans, whom he suspected to be in correspondence with the enemy.

Early in the spring, he left Tezcucó, at the head of three hundred and fifty Spaniards and the whole strength of his allies. He took with him Alvarado and Olid, and intrusted the charge of the garrison to Sandoval. Cortés had had practical acquaintance with the incompetence of the first of these cavaliers for so delicate a post, during his short but disastrous rule in Mexico.

But all his precautions had not availed to

shroud his designs from the vigilant foe, whose eye was on all his movements; who seemed even to divine his thoughts and to be prepared to thwart their execution. He had advanced but a few leagues, when he was met by a considerable body of Mexicans, drawn up to dispute his progress. A sharp skirmish took place, in which the enemy were driven from the ground, and the way was left open to the Christians. They held a circuitous route to the north, and their first point of attack was the insular town of Xaltocan, situated on the northern extremity of the lake of that name, now called San Christóbal. The town was entirely surrounded by water, and communicated with the main land by means of causeways, in the same manner as the Mexican capital. Cortés, riding at the head of his cavalry, advanced along the dike till he was brought to a stand by finding a wide opening in it, through which the waters poured, so as to be altogether impracticable, not only for horse, but for infantry. The lake was covered with canoes filled with Aztec warriors, who, anticipating the movement of the Spaniards, had come to the aid of the city. They now began a furious discharge of stones and arrows on the assailants, while they were themselves tolerably well protected from the musketry of their enemy by the light bulwarks with which, for that purpose, they had fortified their canoes.

The severe volleys of the Mexicans did some injury to the Spaniards and their allies, and began to throw them into disorder, crowded as they were on the narrow causeway, without the means of

advancing, when Cortés ordered a retreat. This was followed by renewed tempests of missiles, accompanied by taunts and fierce yells of defiance. The battle-cry of the Aztec, like the war-whoop of the North American Indian, was an appalling note, according to the Conqueror's own acknowledgment, in the ears of the Spaniards.¹ At this juncture, the general fortunately obtained information from a deserter, one of the Mexican allies, of a ford, by which the army might traverse the shallow lake and penetrate into the place. He instantly despatched the greater part of the infantry on the service, posting himself with the remainder and with the horse at the entrance of the passage, to cover the attack and prevent any interruption in the rear.

The soldiers, under the direction of the Indian guide, forded the lake without much difficulty, though in some places the water came above their girdles. During the passage, they were annoyed by the enemy's missiles; but when they had gained the dry level they took ample revenge, and speedily put all who resisted to the sword. The greater part, together with the townsmen, made their escape in the boats. The place was now abandoned to pillage. The troops found in it many women, who had been left to their fate; and these, together with a considerable quantity of cotton stuffs, gold, and articles of food, fell into the hands of the victors, who, setting fire to

¹“De lejos comenzáron á gritar, como lo suelen hacer en la Guerra, que cierto es cosa espantosa oillos.” Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 209.

the deserted city, returned in triumph to their comrades.²

Continuing his circuitous route, Cortés presented himself successively before three other places, each of which had been deserted by the inhabitants in anticipation of his arrival.³ The principal of these, Azcapozalco, had once been the capital of an independent state. It was now the great slave-market of the Aztecs, where their unfortunate captives were brought and disposed of at public sale. It was also the quarter occupied by the jewellers, and the place whence the Spaniards obtained the goldsmiths who melted down the rich treasures received from Montezuma. But they found there only a small supply of the precious metals, or, indeed, of anything else of value, as the people had been careful to remove their effects. They spared the buildings, however, in consideration of their having met with no resistance.

During the nights, the troops bivouacked in the open fields, maintaining the strictest watch, for the country was all in arms, and beacons were

² Ibid., loc. cit.—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 141.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 20.—Ixtlilxochitl, *Venida de los Españoles*, pp. 13, 14.—Idem, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 92.—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 125.

³ These towns rejoiced in the melodious names of Tenajocoan, Quauhtitlan, and Azcapozalco. I have constantly endeavored to spare the reader, in the text, any unnecessary accumulation of Mexican names, which, as he is aware by this time, have not even brevity to recommend them. [Alaman, with some justice, remarks that these names appear unmelodious to an English writer who does not know how to pronounce them, for the same reason as English names would appear unmelodious to a Mexican. *Conquista de Méjico* (trad. de Vega), tom. ii. p. 115.]

flaming on every hill-top, while dark masses of the enemy were occasionally descried in the distance. The Spaniards were now traversing the most opulent region of Anahuac. Cities and villages were scattered over hill and valley, with cultivated environs blooming around them, all giving token of a dense and industrious population. In the centre of this brilliant circumference stood the Indian metropolis, with its gorgeous tiara of pyramids and temples, attracting the eye of the soldier from every other object, as he wound round the borders of the lake. Every inch of ground which the army trod was familiar to them, —familiar as the scenes of childhood, though with very different associations, for it had been written on their memories in characters of blood. On the right rose the hill of Montezuma,⁴ crowned by the *teocalli* under the roof of which the shattered relics of the army had been gathered on the day following the flight from the capital. In front lay the city of Tacuba, through whose inhospitable streets they had hurried in fear and consternation; and away to the east of it stretched the melancholy causeway.

It was the general's purpose to march at once on Tacuba and establish his quarters in that ancient capital for the present. He found a strong force encamped under its walls, prepared to dispute his entrance. Without waiting for their advance, he rode at full gallop against them with his little body of horse. The arquebuses and

⁴ [The Hill of Los Remedios. *Conquista de México* (trad. de Vega), tom. ii. p. 116.]

cross-bows opened a lively volley on their extended wings, and the infantry, armed with their swords and copper-headed lances and supported by the Indian battalions, followed up the attack of the horse with an alacrity which soon put the enemy to flight. The Spaniards usually opened the combat with a charge of cavalry. But, had the science of the Aztecs been equal to their courage, they might with their long spears have turned the scale of battle, sometimes at least, in their own favor; for it was with the same formidable weapon that the Swiss mountaineers, but a few years before this period of our history, broke and completely foiled the famous *ordonnance* of Charles the Bold, the best-appointed cavalry of their day. But the barbarians were ignorant of the value of this weapon when opposed to cavalry. And, indeed, the appalling apparition of the war-horse and his rider still held a mysterious power over their imaginations, which contributed, perhaps, quite as much as the effective force of the cavalry itself, to their discomfiture. Cortés led his troops without further opposition into the suburbs of Tacuba, the ancient Tlacopan, where he established himself for the night.

On the following morning he found the indefatigable Aztecs again under arms, and, on the open ground before the city, prepared to give him battle. He marched out against them, and, after an action hotly contested, though of no long duration, again routed them. They fled towards the town, but were driven through the streets at the point of the lance, and were compelled, together

with the inhabitants, to evacuate the place. The city was then delivered over to pillage; and the Indian allies, not content with plundering the houses of everything portable within them, set them on fire, and in a short time a quarter of the town—the poorer dwellings, probably, built of light, combustible materials—was in flames. Cortés and his troops did all in their power to stop the conflagration, but the Tlascalans were a fierce race, not easily guided at any time, and when their passions were once kindled it was impossible even for the general himself to control them. They were a terrible auxiliary, and, from their insubordination, as terrible sometimes to friend as to foe.⁵

Cortés proposed to remain in his present quarters for some days, during which time he established his own residence in the ancient palace of the lords of Tlacopan. It was a long range of low buildings, like most of the royal residences in the country, and offered good accommodations for the Spanish forces. During his halt here, there was not a day on which the army was not engaged in one or more rencontres with the enemy. They terminated almost uniformly in favor of the

⁵ They burned this place, according to Cortés, in retaliation of the injuries inflicted by the inhabitants on their countrymen in the retreat: “Y en amaneciendo los Indios nuestros Amigos comenzaron á saquear, y quemar toda la Ciudad, salvo el Aposento donde estabamos, y pusieron tanta diligencia, que aun de él se quemó un Quarto; y esto se hizo, porque quando salimos la otra vez desbaratados de Temixtitan, pasando por esta Ciudad, los Naturales de ella juntamente con los de Temixtitan nos hicieron muy cruel Guerra, y nos matáron muchos Españoles.” Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 210.

Spaniards, though with more or less injury to them and to their allies. One encounter, indeed, had nearly been attended with more fatal consequences.

The Spanish general, in the heat of pursuit, had allowed himself to be decoyed upon the great causeway,—the same which had once been so fatal to his army. He followed the flying foe until he had gained the farther side of the nearest bridge, which had been repaired since the disastrous action of the *noche triste*. When thus far advanced, the Aztecs, with the rapidity of lightning, turned on him, and he beheld a large reinforcement in their rear, all fresh on the field, prepared to support their countrymen. At the same time, swarms of boats, unobserved in the eagerness of the chase, seemed to start up as if by magic, covering the waters around. The Spaniards were now exposed to a perfect hail-storm of missiles, both from the causeway and the lake; but they stood unmoved amidst the tempest, when Cortés, too late perceiving his error, gave orders for the retreat. Slowly, and with admirable coolness, his men receded, step by step, offering a resolute front to the enemy.⁶ The Mexicans came on with their usual vociferation, making the shores echo to their war-cries, and striking at the Spaniards with their long pikes, and with poles, to which the swords taken from the Christians had been fastened. A cavalier, named Volante, bearing the standard of

⁶“Luego mandó, que todos se retraxessen; y con el mejor concierto que pudo, y no bueltas las espaldas, sino los rostros á los contrarios, pie contra pie, como quien haze represas.” Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 141.

Cortés, was felled by one of their weapons, and, tumbling into the lake, was picked up by the Mexican boats. He was a man of a muscular frame, and, as the enemy were dragging him off, he succeeded in extricating himself from their grasp, and, clenching his colors in his hand, with a desperate effort sprang back upon the causeway. At length, after some hard fighting, in which many of the Spaniards were wounded and many of their allies slain, the troops regained the land, where Cortés, with a full heart, returned thanks to Heaven for what he might well regard as a providential deliverance.⁷ It was a salutary lesson; though he should scarcely have needed one, so soon after the affair of Iztapalapan, to warn him of the wily tactics of his enemy.

It had been one of Cortés' principal objects in this expedition to obtain an interview, if possible, with the Aztec emperor, or with some of the great lords at his court, and to try if some means for an accommodation could not be found, by which he might avoid the appeal to arms. An occasion for such a parley presented itself when his forces were one day confronted with those of the enemy, with a broken bridge interposed between them. Cortés, riding in advance of his people, intimated by signs his peaceful intent, and that he wished to confer with the Aztecs. They respected the signal, and, with the aid of his interpreter, he requested that if there were any great chief among

⁷ "Desta manera se escapó Cortés aquella vez del poder de México, y quando se vió en tierra firme, dió muchas gracias á Dios." Ibid., ubi supra.

them he would come forward and hold a parley with him. The Mexicans replied, in derision, they were all chiefs, and bade him speak openly whatever he had to tell them. As the general returned no answer, they asked why he did not make another visit to the capital, and tauntingly added, "Perhaps Malinche does not expect to find there another Montezuma, as obedient to his commands as the former."⁸ Some of them complimented the Tlascalans with the epithet of *women*, who, they said, would never have ventured so near the capital but for the protection of the white men.

The animosity of the two nations was not confined to these harmless though bitter jests, but showed itself in regular cartels of defiance, which daily passed between the principal chieftains. These were followed by combats, in which one or more champions fought on a side, to vindicate the honor of their respective countries. A fair field of fight was given to the warriors, who conducted these combats *à l'outrance* with the punctilio of a European tourney; displaying a valor worthy of the two boldest of the races of Anahuac, and a skill in the management of their weapons, which drew forth the admiration of the Spaniards.⁹

Cortés had now been six days in Tacuba. There was nothing further to detain him, as he had accomplished the chief objects of his expedition. He had humbled several of the places which had been

⁸ "Pensais, que hay agora otro Muteczuma, para que haga todo, lo que quisieredes?" Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 211.

⁹ "Y peleaban los unos con los otros muy hermosamente." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ubi supra.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 20.

most active in their hostility; and he had revived the credit of the Castilian arms, which had been much tarnished by their former reverses in this quarter of the Valley. He had also made himself acquainted with the condition of the capital, which he found in a better posture of defence than he had imagined. All the ravages of the preceding year seemed to be repaired, and there was no evidence, even to his experienced eye, that the wasting hand of war had so lately swept over the land. The Aztec troops, which swarmed through the Valley, seemed to be well appointed, and showed an invincible spirit, as if prepared to resist to the last. It is true, they had been beaten in every encounter. In the open field they were no match for the Spaniards, whose cavalry they could never comprehend, and whose fire-arms easily penetrated the cotton mail which formed the stoutest defence of the Indian warrior. But, entangled in the long streets and narrow lanes of the metropolis, where every house was a citadel, the Spaniards, as experience had shown, would lose much of their superiority. With the Mexican emperor, confident in the strength of his preparations, the general saw there was no probability of effecting an accommodation. He saw, too, the necessity of the most careful preparations on his own part—indeed, that he must strain his resources to the utmost—before he could safely venture to rouse the lion in his lair.

The Spaniards returned by the same route by which they had come. Their retreat was interpreted into a flight by the natives, who hung on

the rear of the army, uttering vainglorious vaunts, and saluting the troops with showers of arrows, which did some mischief. Cortés resorted to one of their own stratagems to rid himself of this annoyance. He divided his cavalry into two or three small parties, and concealed them among some thick shrubbery which fringed both sides of the road. The rest of the army continued its march. The Mexicans followed, unsuspecting of the ambushade, when the horse, suddenly darting from their place of concealment, threw the enemy's flanks into confusion, and the retreating columns of infantry, facing about suddenly, commenced a brisk attack, which completed their consternation. It was a broad and level plain, over which the panic-struck Mexicans made the best of their way, without attempting resistance; while the cavalry, riding them down and piercing the fugitives with their lances, followed up the chase for several miles, in what Cortés calls a truly beautiful style.¹⁰ The army experienced no further annoyance from the enemy.

On their arrival at Tezcuco they were greeted with joy by their comrades, who had received no tidings of them during the fortnight which had elapsed since their departure. The Tlascalans, immediately on their return, requested the general's permission to carry back to their own country the valuable booty which they had gathered

¹⁰ "Y comenzámos á lanzear en ellos, y duró el alcanze cerca de dos leguas todas llanas, como la palma, que fué muy hermosa cosa." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 212.

in their foray,—a request which, however unpalatable, he could not refuse.¹¹

The troops had not been in quarters more than two or three days, when an embassy arrived from Chalco, again soliciting the protection of the Spaniards against the Mexicans, who menaced them from several points in their neighborhood. But the soldiers were so much exhausted by unintermitted vigils, forced marches, battles, and wounds, that Cortés wished to give them a breathing-time to recruit, before engaging in a new expedition. He answered the application of the Chalcans by sending his missives to the allied cities, calling on them to march to the assistance of their confederate. It is not to be supposed that they could comprehend the import of his despatches. But the paper, with its mysterious characters, served for a warrant to the officer who bore it, as the interpreter of the general's commands.

But, although these were implicitly obeyed, the Chalcans felt the danger so pressing that they soon repeated their petition for the Spaniards to come in person to their relief. Cortés no longer hesitated; for he was well aware of the importance of Chalco, not merely on its own account, but from its position, which commanded one of the great avenues to Tlascala, and to Vera Cruz, the intercourse with which should run no risk of interruption. Without further loss of time, there-

¹¹ For the particulars of this expedition of Cortés, see, besides his own Commentaries so often quoted, Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 20,—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 85,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 125,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Venida de los Españoles*, pp. 13, 14,—Bernal Díaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 141.

fore, he detached a body of three hundred Spanish foot and twenty horse, under the command of Sandoval, for the protection of the city.

That active officer soon presented himself before Chalco, and, strengthened by the reinforcement of its own troops and those of the confederate towns, directed his first operations against Huaxtepec, a place of some importance, lying five leagues or more to the south among the mountains. It was held by a strong Mexican force, watching their opportunity to make a descent upon Chalco. The Spaniards found the enemy drawn up at a distance from the town, prepared to receive them. The ground was broken and tangled with bushes, unfavorable to the cavalry, which, in consequence, soon fell into disorder; and Sandoval, finding himself embarrassed by their movements, ordered them, after sustaining some loss, from the field. In their place he brought up his musketeers and crossbowmen, who poured a rapid fire into the thick columns of the Indians. The rest of the infantry, with sword and pike, charged the flanks of the enemy, who, bewildered by the shock, after sustaining considerable slaughter, fell back in an irregular manner, leaving the field of battle to the Spaniards.

The victors proposed to bivouac there for the night. But, while engaged in preparations for their evening meal, they were aroused by the cry of "To arms, to arms! the enemy is upon us!" In an instant the trooper was in his saddle, the soldier grasped his musket or his good Toledo, and the action was renewed with greater fury than

before. The Mexicans had received a reinforcement from the city. But their second attempt was not more fortunate than their first; and the victorious Spaniards, driving their antagonists before them, entered and took possession of the town itself, which had already been evacuated by the inhabitants.¹²

Sandoval took up his quarters in the dwelling of the lord of the place, surrounded by gardens which rivalled those of Iztapalapan in magnificence and surpassed them in extent. They are said to have been two leagues in circumference, having pleasure-houses, and numerous tanks stocked with various kinds of fish; and they were embellished with trees, shrubs, and plants, native and exotic, some selected for their beauty and fragrance, others for their medicinal properties. They were scientifically arranged; and the whole establishment displayed a degree of horticultural taste and knowledge of which it would not have been easy to find a counterpart, at that day, in the more civilized communities of Europe.¹³ Such is the testimony not only of the rude Conquerors,

¹² Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 214, 215.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 146.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 142.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 21.

¹³ "Which gardens," says Cortés, who afterwards passed a day there, "are the largest, freshest, and most beautiful that were ever seen. They have a circuit of two leagues, and through the middle flows a very pleasant stream of water. At distances of two bow-shots are buildings surrounded by grounds planted with fruit-trees of various kinds, with many shrubs and odorous flowers. Truly the whole place is wonderful for its pleasantness and its extent." (Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, pp. 221, 222.) Bernal Diaz is not less emphatic in his admiration. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 142.

but of men of science, who visited these beautiful repositories in the day of their glory.¹⁴

After halting two days to refresh his forces in this agreeable spot, Sandoval marched on Jacapichtla, about twelve miles to the eastward. It was a town, or rather fortress, perched on a rocky eminence almost inaccessible from its steepness. It was garrisoned by a Mexican force, who rolled down on the assailants, as they attempted to scale the heights, huge fragments of rock, which, thundering over the sides of the precipice, carried ruin and desolation in their path. The Indian confederates fell back in dismay from the attempt. But Sandoval, indignant that any achievement should be too difficult for a Spaniard, commanded his cavaliers to dismount, and, declaring that he "would carry the place or die in the attempt," led on his men with the cheering cry of "St. Jago."¹⁵ With renewed courage, they now followed their gallant leader up the ascent, under a storm of lighter missiles, mingled with huge masses of stone, which, breaking into splinters, overturned the assailants and made fearful havoc in their ranks. Sandoval, who had been wounded on the preceding day, received a severe contusion

¹⁴ The distinguished naturalist Hernandez has frequent occasion to notice this garden, which furnished him with many specimens for his great work. It had the good fortune to be preserved after the Conquest, when particular attention was given to its medicinal plants, for the use of a great hospital established in the neighborhood. See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 153.

¹⁵ "E como esto vió el dicho Alguacil Mayor, y los Españoles, determináron de morir, ó subilles por fuerza á lo alto del Pueblo, y con el apellido de *Señor Santiago*, comenzáron á subir." Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 214.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib: 33, cap. 21.

on the head, while more than one of his brave comrades were struck down by his side. Still they clambered up, sustaining themselves by the bushes or projecting pieces of rock, and seemed to force themselves onward as much by the energy of their wills as by the strength of their bodies.

After incredible toil, they stood on the summit, face to face with the astonished garrison. For a moment they paused to recover breath, then sprang furiously on their foes. The struggle was short, but desperate. Most of the Aztecs were put to the sword. Some were thrown headlong over the battlements, and others letting themselves down the precipice, were killed on the borders of a little stream that wound round its base, the waters of which were so polluted with blood that the victors were unable to slake their thirst with them for a full hour!¹⁶

Sandoval, having now accomplished the object of his expedition, by reducing the strongholds which had so long held the Chalcans in awe, returned in triumph to Tezcucó. Meanwhile, the Aztec emperor, whose vigilant eye had been attentive to all that had passed, thought that the absence of so many of its warriors afforded a favorable opportunity for recovering Chalco. He sent a fleet of boats, for this purpose, across the lake, with a numerous force under the command of some of his most valiant chiefs.¹⁷ Fortunately,

¹⁶ So says the *Conquistador*. (Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 215.) Diaz, who will allow no one to hyperbolize but himself, says, "For as long as one might take to say an Ave Maria!" (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 142.) Neither was present.

¹⁷ The gallant Captain Diaz, who affects a sobriety in his own estimates, which often leads him to disparage those of the chaplain

the absent Chalcans reached their city before the arrival of the enemy; but, though supported by their Indian allies, they were so much alarmed by the magnitude of the hostile array that they sent again to the Spaniards, invoking their aid.

The messengers arrived at the same time with Sandoval and his army. Cortés was much puzzled by the contradictory accounts. He suspected some negligence in his lieutenant, and, displeased with his precipitate return in this unsettled state of the affair, ordered him back at once, with such of his forces as were in fighting condition. Sandoval felt deeply injured by this proceeding, but he made no attempt at exculpation, and, obeying his commander in silence, put himself at the head of his troops and made a rapid countermarch on the Indian city.¹⁸

Before he reached it, a battle had been fought between the Mexicans and the confederates, in which the latter, who had acquired unwonted confidence from their recent successes, were victorious. A number of Aztec nobles fell into their hands in the engagement, whom they delivered to Sandoval to be carried off as prisoners to Tezcuco. On his arrival there, the cavalier, wounded by the unworthy treatment he had received, retired to his own quarters without presenting himself before his chief.

Gomara, says that the force consisted of 20,000 warriors in 2000 canoes. *Hist. de la Conquista*, loc. cit.

¹⁸ "El Cortés no le quiso escuchar á Sandoual de enojo, creyendo que por su culpa, ó descuido, recibia mala obra nuestros amigos los de Chalco; y luego sin mas dilacion, ni le oyr, le mandó bolver." *Ibid.*, ubi supra.

During his absence, the inquiries of Cortés had satisfied him of his own precipitate conduct, and of the great injustice he had done his lieutenant. There was no man in the army on whose services he set so high a value, as the responsible situations in which he had placed him plainly showed; and there was none for whom he seems to have entertained a greater personal regard. On Sandoval's return, therefore, Cortés instantly sent to request his attendance; when, with a soldier's frankness, he made such an explanation as soothed the irritated spirit of the cavalier,—a matter of no great difficulty, as the latter had too generous a nature, and too earnest a devotion to his commander and the cause in which they were embarked, to harbor a petty feeling of resentment in his bosom.¹⁹

During the occurrence of these events the work was going forward actively on the canal, and the brigantines were within a fortnight of their completion. The greatest vigilance was required, in the mean time, to prevent their destruction by the enemy, who had already made three ineffectual attempts to burn them on the stocks. The precautions which Cortés thought it necessary to take against the Tezcucans themselves added not a little to his embarrassment.

At this time he received embassies from different Indian states, some of them on the remote shores of the Mexican Gulf, tendering their alle-

¹⁹ Besides the authorities already quoted for Sandoval's expedition, see Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 126,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Hist. Chich.*, MS., cap. 92,—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 86.

giance and soliciting his protection. For this he was partly indebted to the good offices of Ixtlil-xochitl, who, in consequence of his brother's death, was now advanced to the sovereignty of Tezcuco. This important position greatly increased his consideration and authority through the country, of which he freely availed himself to bring the natives under the dominion of the Spaniards.²⁰

The general received also at this time the welcome intelligence of the arrival of three vessels at Villa Rica, with two hundred men on board, well provided with arms and ammunition, and with seventy or eighty horses. It was the most seasonable reinforcement. From what quarter it came is uncertain; most probably from Hispaniola. Cortés, it may be remembered, had sent for supplies to that place; and the authorities of the island, who had general jurisdiction over the affairs of the colonies, had shown themselves, on more than one occasion, well inclined towards him, probably considering him, under all circumstances, as better fitted than any other man to achieve the conquest of the country.²¹

²⁰ "Ixtlilxochitl procuraba siempre traer á la devocion y amistad de los Cristianos no tan solamente á los de el Reyno de Tezcuco sino aun los de las Provincias remotas, rogándoles que todos se procurasen dar de paz al Capitan Cortés, y que aunque de las guerras pasadas algunos tuviesen culpa, era tan afable y deseaba tanto la paz que luego al punto los recibiria en su amistad." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 92.

²¹ Cortés speaks of these vessels as coming at the same time, but does not intimate from what quarter. (Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 216.) Bernal Diaz, who notices only one, says it came from Castile. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 143.) But the old soldier wrote long after the events he commemorates, and may have confused the true order of things. It seems hardly probable that so important a reinforcement should have arrived from Castile, considering that Cortés

The new recruits soon found their way to Tezcuco; as the communications with the port were now open and unobstructed. Among them were several cavaliers of consideration, one of whom, Julian de Alderete, the royal treasurer, came over to superintend the interests of the crown.

There was also in the number a Dominican friar, who brought a quantity of pontifical bulls, offering indulgences to those engaged in war against the infidel. The soldiers were not slow to fortify themselves with the good graces of the Church; and the worthy father, after driving a prosperous traffic with his spiritual wares, had the satisfaction to return home, at the end of a few months, well freighted, in exchange, with the more substantial treasures of the Indies.²²

had yet received none of the royal patronage, or even sanction, which would stimulate adventurers in the mother country to enlist under his standard.

²² Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 143.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 21.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 6.

CHAPTER III

SECOND RECONNOITRING EXPEDITION — ENGAGEMENTS ON THE SIERRA — CAPTURE OF CUERNAVACA — BATTLES AT XOCHIMILCO — NARROW ESCAPE OF CORTÉS — HE ENTERS TACUBA

1521

NOTWITHSTANDING the relief which had been afforded to the people of Chalco, it was so ineffectual that envoys from that city again arrived at Tezcucó, bearing a hieroglyphical chart, on which were depicted several strong places in their neighborhood, garrisoned by the Aztecs, from which they expected annoyance. Cortés determined, this time, to take the affair into his own hands, and to scour the country so effectually as to place Chalco, if possible, in a state of security. He did not confine himself to this object, but proposed, before his return, to pass quite round the great lakes, and reconnoitre the country to the south of them, in the same manner as he had before done to the west. In the course of his march he would direct his arms against some of the strong places from which the Mexicans might expect support in the siege. Two or three weeks must elapse before the completion of the brigantines; and, if no other good resulted from the expedition, it

would give active occupation to his troops, whose turbulent spirits might fester into discontent in the monotonous existence of a camp.

He selected for the expedition thirty horse and three hundred Spanish infantry, with a considerable body of Tlascalan and Tezcucan warriors. The remaining garrison he left in charge of the trusty Sandoval, who, with the friendly lord of the capital, would watch over the construction of the brigantines and protect them from the assaults of the Aztecs.

On the fifth of April he began his march, and on the following day arrived at Chalco, where he was met by a number of the confederate chiefs. With the aid of his faithful interpreters, Doña Marina and Aguilar, he explained to them the objects of his present expedition, stated his purpose soon to enforce the blockade of Mexico, and required their co-operation with the whole strength of their levies. To this they readily assented; and he soon received a sufficient proof of their friendly disposition in the forces which joined him on the march, amounting, according to one of the army, to more than had ever before followed his banner.¹

Taking a southerly direction, the troops, after leaving Chalco, struck into the recesses of the wild sierra, which, with its bristling peaks, serves as a formidable palisade to fence round the beautiful Valley; while within its rugged arms it shuts up many a green and fruitful pasture of its own. As

¹“Viniéron tantos, que en todas las entradas que yo auia ido, despues que en la Nueva España entré, nunca ví tanta gente de guerra de nuestros amigos, como aora fuéron en nuestra compañía.” Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 144.

the Spaniards passed through its deep gorges, they occasionally wound round the base of some huge cliff or rocky eminence, on which the inhabitants had built their towns, in the same manner as was done by the people of Europe in the feudal ages; a position which, however favorable to the picturesque, intimates a sense of insecurity as the cause of it, which may reconcile us to the absence of this striking appendage of the landscape in our own more fortunate country.

The occupants of these airy pinnacles took advantage of their situation to shower down stones and arrows on the troops as they defiled through the narrow passes of the sierra. Though greatly annoyed by their incessant hostilities, Cortés held on his way, till, winding round the base of a castellated cliff occupied by a strong garrison of Indians, he was so severely pressed that he felt to pass on without chastising the aggressors would imply a want of strength which must disparage him in the eyes of his allies. Halting in the Valley, therefore, he detached a small body of light troops to scale the heights, while he remained with the main body of the army below, to guard against surprise from the enemy.

The lower region of the rocky eminence was so steep that the soldiers found it no easy matter to ascend, scrambling, as well as they could, with hand and knee. But, as they came into the more exposed view of the garrison, the latter rolled down huge masses of rock, which, bounding along the declivity and breaking into fragments, crushed the foremost assailants and mangled their limbs

in a frightful manner. Still they strove to work their way upward, now taking advantage of some gully worn by the winter torrent, now sheltering themselves behind a projecting cliff, or some straggling tree anchored among the crevices of the mountain. It was all in vain. For no sooner did they emerge again into open view than the rocky avalanche thundered on their heads with a fury against which steel helm and cuirass were as little defence as gossamer. All the party were more or less wounded. Eight of the number were killed on the spot,—a loss the little band could ill afford,—and the gallant ensign, Corral, who led the advance, saw the banner in his hand torn into shreds.² Cortés, at length, convinced of the impracticability of the attempt, at least without a more severe loss than he was disposed to incur, commanded a retreat. It was high time; for a large body of the enemy were on full march across the Valley to attack him.

He did not wait for their approach, but, gathering his broken files together, headed his cavalry and spurred boldly against them. On the level plain the Spaniards were on their own ground. The Indians, unable to sustain the furious onset, broke, and fell back before it. The flight soon became a rout, and the fiery cavaliers, dashing over them at full gallop, or running them through with their lances, took some revenge for their late discomfiture. The pursuit continued for some miles, till the nimble foe made their escape into

² “Todos descalabrados, y corriendo sangre, y las vanderas rotas, y ocho muertos.” Bernal Díaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.

the rugged fastnesses of the sierra, where the Spaniards did not care to follow. The weather was sultry, and, as the country was nearly destitute of water, the men and horses suffered extremely. Before evening they reached a spot overshadowed by a grove of wild mulberry-trees, in which some scanty springs afforded a miserable supply to the army.

Near the place rose another rocky summit of the sierra, garrisoned by a stronger force than the one which they had encountered in the former part of the day; and at no great distance stood a second fortress at a still greater height, though considerably smaller than its neighbor. This was also tenanted by a body of warriors, who, as well as those of the adjoining cliff, soon made active demonstration of their hostility by pouring down missiles on the troops below. Cortés, anxious to retrieve the disgrace of the morning, ordered an assault on the larger and, as it seemed, more practicable eminence. But, though two attempts were made with great resolution, they were repulsed with loss to the assailants. The rocky sides of the hill had been artificially cut and smoothed, so as greatly to increase the natural difficulties of the ascent. The shades of evening now closed around; and Cortés drew off his men to the mulberry-grove, where he took up his bivouac for the night, deeply chagrined at having been twice foiled by the enemy on the same day.

During the night, the Indian force which occupied the adjoining height passed over to their brethren, to aid them in the encounter which they

foresaw would be renewed on the following morning. No sooner did the Spanish general, at the break of day, become aware of this manœuvre, than, with his usual quickness, he took advantage of it. He detached a body of musketeers and crossbowmen to occupy the deserted eminence, purposing, as soon as this was done, to lead the assault in person against the other. It was not long before the Castilian banner was seen streaming from the rocky pinnacle, when the general instantly led up his men to the attack. And, while the garrison were meeting them resolutely on that quarter, the detachment on the neighboring heights poured into the place a well-directed fire, which so much distressed the enemy that in a very short time they signified their willingness to capitulate.³

On entering the place, the Spaniards found that a plain of some extent ran along the crest of the sierra, and that it was tenanted not only by men, but by women and their families, with their effects. No violence was offered by the victors to the property or persons of the vanquished; and the knowledge of this lenity induced the Indian garrison, who had made so stout a resistance on the morning of the preceding day, to tender their submission.⁴

³ For the assault on the rocks,—the topography of which it is impossible to verify from the narratives of the Conquerors,—see Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 144,—*Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 218–221,—Gomara, *Crónica*, cap. 127,—*Ixtlilxochitl, Venida de los Españoles*, pp. 16, 17,—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 21.

⁴ Cortés, according to Bernal Diaz, ordered the troops who took possession of the second fortress “not to meddle with a grain of maize belonging to the besieged.” Diaz, giving this a very liberal

After a halt of two days in this sequestered region, the army resumed its march in a south-westerly direction on Huaxtepec, the same city which had surrendered to Sandoval. Here they were kindly received by the cacique, and entertained in his magnificent gardens, which Cortés and his officers, who had not before seen them, compared with the best in Castile.⁵ Still threading the wild mountain mazes, the army passed through Jauhtepec and several other places, which were abandoned at their approach. As the inhabitants, however, hung in armed bodies on their flanks and rear, doing them occasionally some mischief, the Spaniards took their revenge by burning the deserted towns.

Thus holding on their fiery track, they descended the bold slope of the Cordilleras, which on the south are far more precipitous than on the Atlantic side. Indeed, a single day's journey is sufficient to place the traveller on a level several thousand feet lower than that occupied by him in the morning; thus conveying him, in a few hours, through the climates of many degrees of latitude. The route of the army led them across many an acre covered with lava and blackened scorïæ, at-

interpretation, proceeded forthwith to load his Indian *tamanes* with everything but maize, as fair booty. He was interrupted in his labors, however, by the captain of the detachment, who gave a more narrow construction to his general's orders, much to the dissatisfaction of the latter, if we may trust the doughty chronicler. *Ibid.*, *ubi supra*.

⁵ "Adonde estava la huerta que he dicho, que es la mejor que auia visto en toda mi vida, y así lo torno á dezir, que Cortés, y el Tesorero Alderete, desde entonces la viéron, y passeáron algo de ella, se admiráron, y dixéron, que mejor cosa de huerta no auian visto en Castilla." Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 144.

testing the volcanic character of the region; though this was frequently relieved by patches of verdure, and even tracts of prodigal fertility, as if Nature were desirous to compensate by these extraordinary efforts for the curse of barrenness which elsewhere had fallen on the land. On the ninth day of their march the troops arrived before the strong city of Quauhnhuac, or Cuernavaca, as since called by the Spaniards.⁶ It was the ancient capital of the Tlahuicas, and the most considerable place for wealth and population in this part of the country. It was tributary to the Aztecs, and a garrison of this nation was quartered within its walls. The town was singularly situated, on a projecting piece of land, encompassed by *barrancas*, or formidable ravines, except on one side, which opened on a rich and well-cultivated country. For though the place stood at an elevation of between five and six thousand feet above the level of the sea, it had a southern exposure so sheltered by the mountain barrier on the north that its climate was as soft and genial as that of a much lower region.

The Spaniards, on arriving before the city, the limit of their southerly progress, found themselves separated from it by one of the vast *barrancas* before noticed, which resembled one of those frightful rents not unfrequent in the Mexican

⁶ This barbarous Indian name is tortured into all possible variations by the old chroniclers. The town soon received from the Spaniards the name which it now bears, of Cuernavaca, and by which it is indicated on modern maps. "Prevalse poi quello di *Cuernabaca*, col quale è presentemente conosciuta dagli Spagnuoli." Clavigero, *Stor. del Messico*, tom. iii. p. 185, nota.

Andes, the result, no doubt, of some terrible convulsion in earlier ages. The rocky sides of the ravine sank perpendicularly down, so bare as scarcely to exhibit even a vestige of the cactus, or of the other hardy plants with which Nature in these fruitful regions so gracefully covers up her deformities. The bottom of the chasm, however, showed a striking contrast to this, being literally choked up with a rich and spontaneous vegetation; for the huge walls of rock which shut in these barrancas, while they screen them from the cold winds of the Cordilleras, reflect the rays of a vertical sun, so as to produce an almost suffocating heat in the enclosure, stimulating the soil to the rank fertility of the *tierra caliente*. Under the action of this forcing apparatus,—so to speak,—the inhabitants of the towns on their margin above may with ease obtain the vegetable products which are to be found on the sultry level of the lowlands.*

At the bottom of the ravine was seen a little stream, which, oozing from the stony bowels of the sierra, tumbled along its narrow channel and contributed by its perpetual moisture to the exuberant fertility of the valley. This rivulet, which at certain seasons of the year was swollen to a torrent, was traversed at some distance below the town, where the sloping sides of the barranca afforded a more practicable passage, by two rude bridges, both of which had been broken, in anticipation of the coming of the Spaniards. The latter

* ["The whole of this description," remarks Alaman, "agrees perfectly with the present aspect of Cuernavaca and the *barrancas* surrounding it."—K.]

had now arrived on the brink of the chasm which intervened between them and the city. It was, as has been remarked, of no great width, and the army drawn up on its borders was directly exposed to the archery of the garrison, on whom its own fire made little impression, protected as they were by their defences.

The general, annoyed by his position, sent a detachment to seek a passage lower down, by which the troops might be landed on the other side. But, although the banks of the ravine became less formidable as they descended, they found no means of crossing the river, till a path unexpectedly presented itself, on which, probably, no one before had ever been daring enough to venture.

From the cliffs on the opposite sides of the barranca, two huge trees shot up to an enormous height, and, inclining towards each other, interlaced their boughs so as to form a sort of natural bridge. Across this avenue, in mid-air, a Tlascalcan conceived it would not be difficult to pass to the opposite bank. The bold mountaineer succeeded in the attempt, and was soon followed by several others of his countrymen, trained to feats of agility and strength among their native hills. The Spaniards imitated their example. It was a perilous effort for an armed man to make his way over this aerial causeway, swayed to and fro by the wind, where the brain might become giddy, and where a single false movement of hand or foot would plunge him in the abyss below. Three of the soldiers lost their hold and fell. The rest, consisting of some twenty or thirty Spaniards and

a considerable number of Tlascalans, alighted in safety on the other bank.⁷ There hastily forming, they marched with all speed on the city. The enemy, engaged in their contest with the Castilians on the opposite brink of the ravine, were taken by surprise,—which, indeed, could scarcely have been exceeded if they had seen their foe drop from the clouds on the field of battle.

They made a brave resistance, however, when fortunately the Spaniards succeeded in repairing one of the dilapidated bridges in such a manner as to enable both cavalry and foot to cross the river, though with much delay. The horse, under Olid and Andres de Tápia, instantly rode up to the succor of their countrymen. They were soon followed by Cortés at the head of the remaining battalions, and the enemy, driven from one point to another, were compelled to evacuate the city and to take refuge among the mountains. The buildings in one quarter of the town were speedily wrapped in flames. The place was abandoned to pillage, and, as it was one of the most opulent marts in the country, it amply compensated the victors for the toil and danger they had encountered. The trembling caciques, returning soon after to the city, appeared before Cortés, and deprecating his resentment by charging the blame, as usual, on the Mexicans, threw themselves on his

⁷ The stout-hearted Diaz was one of those who performed this dangerous feat, though his head swam so, as he tells us, that he scarcely knew how he got on. “Porque de mí digo, que verdaderamente quando passaua, q lo ví mui peligroso, é malo de passar, y se me desvanecia la cabeça, y todavía passé yo, y otros veinte, ó treinta soldados, y muchos Tlascaltecas.” Hist. de la Conquista, ubi supra.

mercy. Satisfied with their submission, he allowed no further violence to the inhabitants.⁸

Having thus accomplished the great object of his expedition across the mountains, the Spanish commander turned his face northwards, to recross the formidable barrier which divided him from the Valley. The ascent, steep and laborious, was rendered still more difficult by fragments of rock and loose stones, which encumbered the passes. The mountain sides and summits were shaggy with thick forests of pine and stunted oak, which threw a melancholy gloom over the region, still further heightened at the present day by its being a favorite haunt of banditti.

The weather was sultry, and, as the stony soil was nearly destitute of water, the troops suffered severely from thirst. Several of them, indeed, fainted on the road, and a few of the Indian allies perished from exhaustion.⁹ The line of march must have taken the army across the eastern shoulder of the mountain, called the *Cruz del Marques*, or Cross of the Marquess, from a huge stone cross erected there to indicate the boundary of the territories granted by the Crown to Cortés, as Marquis of the Valley. Much, indeed, of the route lately traversed by the troops lay across the

⁸ For the preceding account of the capture of Cuernavaca, see Bernal Diaz, ubi supra,—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 21,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 93,—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 8,—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 87,—Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 223, 224.

⁹ “Una Tierra de Pinales, despoblada, y sin ninguna agua, la qual y un Puerto pasámos con grandíssimo trabajo, y sin beber: tanto, que muchos de los Indios que iban con nosotros perecieron de sed.” Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 224.

princely domain subsequently assigned to the Conqueror.¹⁰

The Spaniards were greeted from these heights with a different view from any which they had before had of the Mexican Valley, made more attractive in their eyes, doubtless, by contrast with the savage scenery in which they had lately been involved. It was its most pleasant and populous quarter; for nowhere did its cities and villages cluster together in such numbers as round the lake of sweet water. From whatever quarter seen, however, the enchanting region presented the same aspect of natural beauty and cultivation, with its flourishing villas, and its fair lake in the centre, whose dark and polished surface glistened like a mirror, deep set in the huge frame-work of porphyry in which nature had enclosed it.

The point of attack selected by the general was Xochimilco, or "the field of flowers," as its name implies, from the floating gardens which rode at anchor, as it were, on the neighboring waters.¹¹ It was one of the most potent and wealthy cities in the Valley, and a stanch vassal of the Aztec crown. It stood, like the capital itself, partly in the water, and was approached in that quarter by causeways of no great length. The town was composed of houses like those of most other places of

¹⁰ The city of Cuernavaca was comprehended in the patrimony of the dukes of Monteleone, descendants and heirs of the *Conquistador*. —The Spaniards, in their line of march towards the north, did not deviate far, probably, from the great road which now leads from Mexico to Acapulco, still exhibiting in this upper portion of it the same characteristic features as at the period of the Conquest.

¹¹ Clavigero, *Stor. del Messico*, tom. iii. p. 187, nota.

like magnitude in the country, mostly of cottages or huts made of clay and the light bamboo, mingled with aspiring *teocallis*, and edifices of stone, belonging to the more opulent classes.

As the Spaniards advanced, they were met by skirmishing parties of the enemy, who, after dismissing a light volley of arrows, rapidly retreated before them. As they took the direction of Xochimilco, Cortés inferred that they were prepared to resist him in considerable force. It exceeded his expectations.

On traversing the principal causeway, he found it occupied at the farther extremity by a numerous body of warriors, who, stationed on the opposite side of a bridge, which had been broken, were prepared to dispute his passage. They had constructed a temporary barrier of palisades, which screened them from the fire of the musketry. But the water in its neighborhood was very shallow, and the cavaliers and infantry, plunging into it, soon made their way, swimming or wading, as they could, in the face of a storm of missiles, to the landing near the town. Here they closed with the enemy, and hand to hand, after a sharp struggle, drove them back on the city; a few, however, taking the direction of the open country, were followed up by the cavalry. The great mass, hotly pursued by the infantry, were driven through street and lane, without much further resistance. Cortés, with a few followers, disengaging himself from the tumult, remained near the entrance of the city. He had not been there long when he was assailed by a fresh body of Indians, who sud-

denly poured into the place from a neighboring dike. The general, with his usual fearlessness, threw himself into the midst, in hopes to check their advance. But his own followers were too few to support him, and he was overwhelmed by the crowd of combatants. His horse lost his footing and fell; and Cortés, who received a severe blow on the head before he could rise, was seized and dragged off in triumph by the Indians. At this critical moment, a Tlascalán, who perceived the general's extremity, sprang, like one of the wild ocelots of his own forests, into the midst of the assailants, and endeavored to tear him from their grasp. Two of the general's servants also speedily came to the rescue, and Cortés, with their aid and that of the brave Tlascalán, succeeded in regaining his feet and shaking off his enemies. To vault into the saddle and brandish his good lance was but the work of a moment. Others of his men quickly came up, and the clash of arms reaching the ears of the Spaniards, who had gone in pursuit, they returned, and, after a desperate conflict, forced the enemy from the city. Their retreat, however, was intercepted by the cavalry, returning from the country, and, thus hemmed in between the opposite columns, they were cut to pieces, or saved themselves only by plunging into the lake.¹²

¹² Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 226.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 8.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 21.—This is the general's own account of the matter. Diaz, however, says that he was indebted for his rescue to a Castilian, named Olea, supported by some Tlascalans, and that his preserver received three severe wounds himself on the occasion. (Hist. de la

This was the greatest personal danger which Cortés had yet encountered. His life was in the power of the barbarians, and, had it not been for their eagerness to take him prisoner, he must undoubtedly have lost it. To the same cause may be frequently attributed the preservation of the Spaniards in these engagements. The next day he sought, it is said, for the Tlascalan who came so boldly to his rescue, and, as he could learn nothing of him, he gave the credit of his preservation to his patron, St. Peter.¹³ He may well be excused for presuming the interposition of his good Genius to shield him from the awful doom of the captive,—a doom not likely to be mitigated in his case. That heart must have been a bold one, indeed, which, from any motive, could voluntarily encounter such a peril! Yet his followers did as much, and that, too, for a much inferior reward.

The period which we are reviewing was still the age of chivalry,—that stirring and adventurous age, of which we can form little conception in the present day of sober, practical reality. The Spaniard, with his nice point of honor, high romance, and proud, vainglorious vaunt, was the true representative of that age. The Europeans generally had not yet learned to accommodate themselves to a life of literary toil, or to the drudgery of trade or the patient tillage of the soil. They left these

Conquista, cap. 145.) This was an affair, however, in which Cortés ought to be better informed than any one else, and one, moreover, not likely to slip his memory. The old soldier has probably confounded it with another and similar adventure of his commander.

¹³ “Otro Día buscó Cortés al Indio, que le socorrió, i muerto, ni vivo no pareció; i Cortés, por la devocion de San Pedro, juzgo que él le avia ayudado.” Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 8.

to the hooded inmate of the cloister, the humble burgher, and the miserable serf. Arms was the only profession worthy of gentle blood,—the only career which the high-mettled cavalier could tread with honor. The New World, with its strange and mysterious perils, afforded a noble theatre for the exercise of his calling; and the Spaniard entered on it with all the enthusiasm of a paladin of romance.

Other nations entered on it also, but with different motives. The French sent forth their missionaries to take up their dwelling among the heathen, who, in the good work of winning souls to Paradise, were content to wear—nay, sometimes seemed to court—the crown of martyrdom. The Dutch, too, had their mission, but it was one of worldly lucre, and they found a recompense for toil and suffering in their gainful traffic with the natives. While our own Puritan fathers, with the true Anglo-Saxon spirit, left their pleasant homes across the waters, and pitched their tents in the howling wilderness, that they might enjoy the sweets of civil and religious freedom. But the Spaniard came over to the New World in the true spirit of a knight-errant, courting adventure, however perilous, wooing danger, as it would seem, for its own sake. With sword and lance, he was ever ready to do battle for the Faith; and, as he raised his old war-cry of “St. Jago,” he fancied himself fighting under the banner of the military apostle, and felt his single arm a match for more than a hundred infidels! It was the expiring age of chivalry; and Spain, romantic Spain was the

land where its light lingered longest above the horizon.

It was not yet dusk when Cortés and his followers re-entered the city; and the general's first act was to ascend a neighboring *teocalli* and reconnoitre the surrounding country. He there beheld a sight which might have troubled a bolder spirit than his. The surface of the salt lake was darkened with canoes, and the causeway, for many a mile, with Indian squadrons, apparently on their march toward the Christian camp. In fact, no sooner had Guatemozin been apprised of the arrival of the white men at Xochimilco than he mustered his levies in great force to relieve the city. They were now on their march, and, as the capital was but four leagues distant, would arrive soon after night-fall.¹⁴

Cortés made active preparations for the defence of his quarters. He stationed a corps of pikemen along the landing where the Aztecs would be likely to disembark. He doubled the sentinels, and, with his principal officers, made the rounds repeatedly in the course of the night. In addition to other causes for watchfulness, the bolts of the crossbowmen were nearly exhausted, and the archers were busily employed in preparing and adjusting shafts to the copper heads, of which great store had been provided for the army. There was little sleep in the camp that night.¹⁵

¹⁴ "Por el Agua á una muy grande flota de Canoas, que creo, que pasaban de dos mil; y en ellas venian mas de doce mil Hombres de Guerra; é por la Tierra llegó tanta multitud de Gente, que todos los Campos eubrian." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 227.

¹⁵ "Y acordóse que huviesse mui buena vela en todo nuestro Real, repartida á los puertos, é azequias por donde auian de venir á des-

It passed away, however, without molestation from the enemy. Though not stormy, it was exceedingly dark. But, although the Spaniards on duty could see nothing, they distinctly heard the sound of many oars in the water, at no great distance from the shore. Yet those on board the canoes made no attempt to land, distrusting, or advised, it may be, of the preparations made for their reception. With early dawn they were under arms, and, without waiting for the movement of the Spaniards, poured into the city and attacked them in their own quarters.

The Spaniards, who were gathered in the area round one of the *teocallis*, were taken at disadvantage in the town, where the narrow lanes and streets, many of them covered with a smooth and slippery cement, offered obvious impediments to the manœuvres of cavalry. But Cortés hastily formed his musketeers and crossbowmen, and poured such a lively, well-directed fire into the enemy's ranks as threw him into disorder and compelled him to recoil. The infantry, with their long pikes, followed up the blow; and the horse, charging at full speed as the retreating Aztecs emerged from the city, drove them several miles along the main land.

At some distance, however, they were met by a strong reinforcement of their countrymen, and, rallying, the tide of battle turned, and the cavaliers, swept along by it, gave the rein to their steeds and rode back at full gallop towards the

embarcar, y los de acuallo mui á punto toda la noche ensillados y enfrenados, aguardando en la calçada, y tierra firme, y todos los Capitanes, y Cortés con ellos, haziendo vela y ronda toda la noche." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 145.

town. They had not proceeded very far, when they came upon the main body of the army, advancing rapidly to their support. Thus strengthened, they once more returned to the charge, and the rival hosts met together in full career, with the shock of an earthquake. For a time, victory seemed to hang in the balance, as the mighty press reeled to and fro under the opposite impulse, and a confused shout rose up towards heaven, in which the war-whoop of the savage was mingled with the battle-cry of the Christian,—a still stranger sound on these sequestered shores. But, in the end, Castilian valor, or rather Castilian arms and discipline, proved triumphant. The enemy faltered, gave way, and, recoiling step by step, the retreat soon terminated in a rout, and the Spaniards, following up the flying foe, drove them from the field with such dreadful slaughter that they made no further attempt to renew the battle.

The victors were now undisputed masters of the city. It was a wealthy place, well stored with Indian fabrics, cotton, gold, feather-work, and other articles of luxury and use, affording a rich booty to the soldiers. While engaged in the work of plunder, a party of the enemy, landing from their canoes, fell on some of the stragglers, laden with merchandise, and made four of them prisoners. It created a greater sensation among the troops than if ten times that number had fallen on the field. Indeed, it was rare that a Spaniard allowed himself to be taken alive. In the present instance the unfortunate men were taken by surprise. They were hurried to the capital, and soon after sacrificed;

when their arms and legs were cut off, by the command of the ferocious young chief of the Aztecs, and sent round to the different cities, with the assurance that this should be the fate of the enemies of Mexico!¹⁶

From the prisoners taken in the late engagement, Cortés learned that the forces already sent by Guatemozin formed but a small part of his levies; that his policy was to send detachment after detachment, until the Spaniards, however victorious they might come off from the contest with each individually, would, in the end, succumb from mere exhaustion, and thus be vanquished, as it were, by their own victories.

The soldiers having now sacked the city, Cortés did not care to await further assaults from the enemy in his present quarters. On the fourth morning after his arrival, he mustered his forces on a neighboring plain. They came, many of them reeling under the weight of their plunder. The general saw this with uneasiness. They were to march, he said, through a populous country, all in arms to dispute their passage. To secure their safety, they should move as light and unencumbered as possible. The sight of so much spoil would sharpen

¹⁶ Diaz, who had an easy faith, states, as a fact, that the limbs of the unfortunate men were cut off *before* their sacrifice: "Manda cortar pies y brazos á los tristes nuestros compañeros, y las embia por muchos pueblos nuestros amigos de los q̃ nos auian venido de paz, y les embia á dezir, que antes que bolvamos á Tezcucó, piensa no quedará ninguno de nosotros á vida, y con los coraçones y sangre hizo sacrificio á sus ídolos." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 145.)—This is not very probable. The Aztecs did not, like our North American Indians, torture their enemies from mere cruelty, but in conformity to the prescribed regulations of their ritual. The captive was a religious victim.

the appetite of their enemies, and draw them on, like a flock of famished eagles after their prey. But his eloquence was lost on his men, who plainly told him they had a right to the fruit of their victories, and that what they had won with their swords they knew well enough how to defend with them.

Seeing them thus bent on their purpose, the general did not care to balk their inclinations. He ordered the baggage to the centre, and placed a few of the cavalry over it; dividing the remainder between the front and rear, in which latter post, as that most exposed to attack, he also stationed his arquebusiers and crossbowmen. Thus prepared, he resumed his march, but first set fire to the combustible buildings of Xochimilco, in retaliation for the resistance he had met there.¹⁷ The light of the burning city streamed high into the air, sending its ominous glare far and wide across the waters, and telling the inhabitants on their margin that the fatal strangers so long predicted by their oracles had descended like a consuming flame upon their borders.¹⁸

¹⁷ "Y al cabo dejándola toda quemada y asolada nos partímos; y cierto era mucho para ver, porque tenia muchas Casas, y Torres de sus Ídolos de cal y canto." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 228.

¹⁸ For other particulars of the actions at Xochimilco, see Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 23, cap. 21,—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 8, 11,—Ixtlilxochitl, *Venida de los Españoles*, p. 18,—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 87, 88,—Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 145.—The Conqueror's own account of these engagements has not his usual perspicuity, perhaps from its brevity. A more than ordinary confusion, indeed, prevails in the different reports of them, even those proceeding from contemporaries, making it extremely difficult to collect a probable narrative from au-

Small bodies of the enemy were seen occasionally at a distance, but they did not venture to attack the army on its march, which, before noon, brought them to Cojohuacan, a large town about two leagues distant from Xochimilco. One could scarcely travel that distance in this populous quarter of the Valley without meeting with a place of considerable size, oftentimes the capital of what had formerly been an independent state. The inhabitants, members of different tribes, and speaking dialects somewhat different, belonged to the same great family of nations, who had come from the real or imaginary region of Aztlán, in the far Northwest. Gathered round the shores of their Alpine sea, these petty communities continued, after their incorporation with the Aztec monarchy, to maintain a spirit of rivalry in their intercourse with one another, which—as with the cities on the Mediterranean in the feudal ages—quickened their mental energies, and raised the Mexican Valley higher in the scale of civilization than most other quarters of Anahuac.

The town at which the army had now arrived was deserted by its inhabitants; and Cortés halted two days there to restore his troops and give the needful attention to the wounded.¹⁹ He made use

authorities not only contradicting one another, but themselves. It is rare, at any time, that two accounts of a battle coincide in all respects; the range of observation for each individual is necessarily so limited and different, and it is so difficult to make a cool observation at all, in the hurry and heat of conflict. Any one who has conversed with the survivors will readily comprehend this, and be apt to conclude that, wherever he may look for truth, it will hardly be on the battle-ground.

¹⁹ This place, recommended by the exceeding beauty of its situation, became, after the Conquest, a favorite residence of Cortés, who

of the time to reconnoitre the neighboring ground, and, taking with him a strong detachment, descended on the causeway which led from Cojohuacan to the great avenue of Iztapalapan.²⁰ At the point of intersection, called Xoloc, he found a strong barrier, or fortification, behind which a Mexican force was intrenched. Their archery did some mischief to the Spaniards as they came within bowshot. But the latter, marching intrepidly forward in face of the arrowy shower, stormed the works, and, after an obstinate struggle, drove the enemy from their position.²¹ Cortés then advanced some way on the great causeway of Iztapalapan.

He founded a nunnery in it, and commanded in his will that his bones should be removed thither from any part of the world in which he might die: "Que mis huesos—los lleven á la mi Villa de Coyoacan, y allí les den tierra en el Monesterio de Monjas, que mando hacer y edificar en la dicha mi Villa." Testamento de Hernan Cortés, MS.

²⁰ This, says Archbishop Lorenzana, was the modern *calzada de la Piedad*. (Rel. Terc. de Cortés, p. 229, nota.) But it is not easy to reconcile this with the elaborate chart which M. de Humboldt has given of the Valley. A short arm, which reached from this city in the days of the Aztecs, touched obliquely the great southern avenue by which the Spaniards first entered the capital. As the waters which once entirely surrounded Mexico have shrunk into their narrow basin, the face of the country has undergone a great change, and, though the foundations of the principal causeways are still maintained, it is not always easy to discern vestiges of the ancient avenues.*

²¹ "We came to a wall which they had built across the causeway, and the foot-soldiers began to attack it; and though it was very thick and stoutly defended, and ten Spaniards were wounded, at length they gained it, killing many of the enemy, although the musketeers were without powder and the bowmen without arrows." Rel. Terc., ubi supra.

* ["La calzada de Iztapalapan," says Alaman, who has made a minute study of the topography, "es la de San Antonio Abad, que conduce á San Augustin de las Cuevas ó Tlalpam."—K.]

palapan; but he beheld the farther extremity darkened by a numerous array of warriors, and, as he did not care to engage in unnecessary hostilities, especially as his ammunition was nearly exhausted, he fell back and retreated to his own quarters.

The following day, the army continued its march, taking the road to Tacuba, but a few miles distant. On the way it experienced much annoyance from straggling parties of the enemy, who, furious at the sight of the booty which the invaders were bearing away, made repeated attacks on their flanks and rear. Cortés retaliated, as on the former expedition, by one of their own stratagems, but with less success than before; for, pursuing the retreating enemy too hotly, he fell with his cavalry into an ambuscade which they had prepared for him in their turn. He was not yet a match for their wily tactics. The Spanish cavaliers were enveloped in a moment by their subtle foe, and separated from the rest of the army. But, spurring on their good steeds, and charging in a solid column together, they succeeded in breaking through the Indian array, and in making their escape, except two individuals, who fell into the enemy's hands. They were the general's own servants, who had followed him faithfully through the whole campaign, and he was deeply affected by their loss,—rendered the more distressing by the consideration of the dismal fate that awaited them. When the little band rejoined the army, which had halted, in some anxiety at their absence, under the walls of Tacuba, the soldiers were astonished at

the dejected mien of their commander, which too visibly betrayed his emotion.²²

The sun was still high in the heavens when they entered the ancient capital of the Tepanecs. The first care of Cortés was to ascend the principal *teocalli* and survey the surrounding country. It was an admirable point of view, commanding the capital, which lay but little more than a league distant, and its immediate environs. Cortés was accompanied by Alderete, the treasurer, and some other cavaliers, who had lately joined his banner. The spectacle was still new to them; and, as they gazed on the stately city, with its broad lake covered with boats and barges hurrying to and fro, some laden with merchandise, or fruits and vegetables, for the markets of Tenochtitlan, others crowded with warriors, they could not withhold their admiration at the life and activity of the scene, declaring that nothing but the hand of Providence could have led their countrymen safe through the heart of this powerful empire.²³

In the midst of the admiring circle, the brow of Cortés alone was observed to be overcast, and a sigh, which now and then stole audibly from his bosom, showed the gloomy working of his

²² "Y estando en esto viene Cortés, con el qual nos alegrámos, puesto que él venia muy triste y como lloroso." Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 145.

²³ "Pues quando viéron la gran ciudad de México, y la laguna, y tanta multitud de canoas que unas ivan cargadas con bastimentos, y otras ivan á pescar, y otras valdías, mucho mas se espantáron, porque no las auian visto, hasta en aquella saçon: y dixéron, que nuestra venida en esta Nueva España, que no eran cosas de hombres humanos, sino que la gran misericordia de Dios era quiê nos sostenia." Bernal Díaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 145.

thoughts.²⁴ "Take comfort," said one of the cavaliers, approaching his commander, and wishing to console him, in his rough way, for his recent loss; "you must not lay these things so much to heart; it is, after all, but the fortune of war." The general's answer showed the nature of his meditations. "You are my witness," said he, "how often I have endeavored to persuade yonder capital peacefully to submit. It fills me with grief when I think of the toil and the dangers my brave followers have yet to encounter before we can call it ours. But the time is come when we must put our hands to the work."²⁵

There can be no doubt that Cortés, with every other man in his army, felt he was engaged on a holy crusade, and that, independently of personal considerations, he could not serve Heaven better than by planting the Cross on the blood-stained towers of the heathen metropolis. But it was natural that he should feel some compunction as he gazed on the goodly scene, and thought of the coming tempest, and how soon the opening blossoms of civilization which there met his eye must wither under the rude breath of War. It was a striking spectacle, that of the great Conqueror thus brooding in silence over the desolation he was about to bring on the land! It seems to have made a

²⁴ "En este instante suspiró Cortés cō vna muy grã tristeza, mui mayor q̃ la q̃ de antes traia." Ibid., loc. cit.

²⁵ "Y Cortés le dixo, que ya veia quantas vezes auia embiado á México á rogalles con la paz, y que la tristeza no la tenia por sola vna cosa, sino en pensar en los grandes trabajos en que nos auiamos de ver, hasta tornar á señorear; y que con la ayuda de Dios presto lo porniamos por la obra." Ibid., ubi supra.

deep impression on his soldiers, little accustomed to such proofs of his sensibility; and it forms the burden of some of those *romances*, or national ballads, with which the Castilian minstrel, in the olden time, delighted to commemorate the favorite heroes of his country, and which, coming mid-way between oral tradition and chronicle, have been found as imperishable a record as chronicle itself.²⁶

Tacuba was the point which Cortés had reached on his former expedition round the northern side of the Valley. He had now, therefore, made the entire circuit of the great lake; had reconnoitred the several approaches to the capital, and inspected with his own eyes the dispositions made on the opposite quarters for its defence. He had no occasion to prolong his stay in Tacuba, the vicinity of which to Mexico must soon bring on him its whole warlike population.

Early on the following morning he resumed his march, taking the route pursued in the former expedition north of the small lakes. He met with less annoyance from the enemy than on the preceding days; a circumstance owing in some degree,

²⁶ Diaz gives the opening *redondillas* of the *romance*, which I have not been able to find in any of the printed collections:

“ En Tacuba está Cortés,
cô su esquadron esforçado,
triste estana, y muy penoso,
triste, y con gran cuidado,
la vna mano en la mexilla,
y la otra en el costado,” etc.

It may be thus done into pretty literal doggerel:

In Tacuba stood Cortés,
With many a care oppress,
Thoughts of the past came o'er him,
And he bowed his haughty crest.
One hand upon his cheek he laid,
The other on his breast,
While his valiant squadrons round him, etc.

perhaps, to the state of the weather, which was exceedingly tempestuous. The soldiers, with their garments heavy with moisture, ploughed their way with difficulty through miry roads flooded by the torrents. On one occasion, as their military chronicler informs us, the officers neglected to go the rounds of the camp at night, and the sentinels to mount guard, trusting to the violence of the storm for their protection. Yet the fate of Narvaez might have taught them not to put their faith in the elements.

At Acolman, in the Acolhuan territory, they were met by Sandoval, with the friendly cacique of Tezcuco, and several cavaliers, among whom were some recently arrived from the Islands. They cordially greeted their countrymen, and communicated the tidings that the canal was completed, and that the brigantines, rigged and equipped, were ready to be launched on the bosom of the lake. There seemed to be no reason, therefore, for longer postponing operations against Mexico.—With this welcome intelligence, Cortés and his victorious legions made their entry for the last time into the Acolhuan capital, having consumed just three weeks in completing the circuit of the Valley.

CHAPTER IV

CONSPIRACY IN THE ARMY — BRIGANTINES
LAUNCHED — MUSTER OF FORCES — EXECUTION
OF XICOTENCATL — MARCH OF THE ARMY — BE-
GINNING OF THE SIEGE

1521

AT the very time when Cortés was occupied with reconnoitring the Valley, preparatory to his siege of the capital, a busy faction in Castile was laboring to subvert his authority and defeat his plans of conquest altogether. The fame of his brilliant exploits had spread not only through the Isles, but to Spain and many parts of Europe, where a general admiration was felt for the invincible energy of the man who with his single arm, as it were, could so long maintain a contest with the powerful Indian empire. The absence of the Spanish monarch from his dominions, and the troubles of the country, can alone explain the supine indifference shown by the government to the prosecution of this great enterprise. To the same causes it may be ascribed that no action was had in regard to the suits of Velasquez and Narvaez, backed as they were by so potent an advocate as Bishop Fonseca, president of the Council of the Indies. The reins of government had fallen into



ADRIANVS VI P.M.



the hands of Adrian of Utrecht, Charles's preceptor, and afterwards Pope,—a man of learning, and not without sagacity, but slow and timid in his policy, and altogether incapable of that decisive action which suited the bold genius of his predecessor, Cardinal Ximenes.

In the spring of 1521, however, a number of ordinances passed the Council of the Indies, which threatened an important innovation in the affairs of New Spain. It was decreed that the Royal Audience of Hispaniola should abandon the proceedings already instituted against Narvaez for his treatment of the commissioner Ayllon; that that unfortunate commander should be released from his confinement at Vera Cruz; and that an arbitrator should be sent to Mexico with authority to investigate the affairs and conduct of Cortés, and to render ample justice to the governor of Cuba. There were not wanting persons at court who looked with dissatisfaction on these proceedings, as an unworthy requital of the services of Cortés, and who thought the present moment, at any rate, not the most suitable for taking measures which might discourage the general and perhaps render him desperate. But the arrogant temper of the bishop of Burgos overruled all objections; and the ordinances, having been approved by the Regency, were signed by that body, April 11, 1521. A person named Tápia, one of the functionaries of the Audience at St. Domingo, was selected as the new commissioner to be despatched to Vera Cruz. Fortunately, circumstances occurred which postponed the execution of the design for the present, and

permitted Cortés to go forward unmolested in his career of conquest.¹

But, while thus allowed to remain, for the present at least, in possession of authority, he was assailed by a danger nearer home, which menaced not only his authority, but his life. This was a conspiracy in the army, of a more dark and dangerous character than any hitherto formed there. It was set on foot by a common soldier, named Antonio Villafañá, a native of Old Castile, of whom nothing is known but his share in this transaction. He was one of the troop of Narvaez,—that leaven of disaffection, which had remained with the army, swelling with discontent on every light occasion, and ready at all times to rise into mutiny. They had voluntarily continued in the service after the secession of their comrades at Tlascala; but it was from the same mercenary hopes with which they had originally embarked in the expedition,—and in these they were destined still to be disappointed. They had little of the true spirit of adventure which distinguished the old companions of Cortés; and they found the barren laurels of victory but a sorry recompense for all their toils and sufferings.

With these men were joined others, who had causes of personal disgust with the general; and others, again, who looked with distrust on the result of the war. The gloomy fate of their countrymen who had fallen into the enemy's hands filled them with dismay. They felt themselves the vic-

¹ Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 15.—Relacion de Alonso de Verzara, Escrivano Público de Vera Cruz, MS., dec. 21.

tims of a chimerical spirit in their leader, who, with such inadequate means, was urging to extremity so ferocious and formidable a foe; and they shrank with something like apprehension from thus pursuing the enemy into his own haunts, where he would gather tenfold energy from despair.

These men would have willingly abandoned the enterprise and returned to Cuba; but how could they do it? Cortés had control over the whole route from the city to the sea-coast; and not a vessel could leave its port without his warrant. Even if he were put out of the way, there were others, his principal officers, ready to step into his place and avenge the death of their commander. It was necessary to embrace these, also, in the scheme of destruction; and it was proposed, therefore, together with Cortés, to assassinate Sandoval, Olid, Alvarado, and two or three others most devoted to his interests. The conspirators would then raise the cry of liberty, and doubted not that they should be joined by the greater part of the army, or enough, at least, to enable them to work their own pleasure. They proposed to offer the command, on Cortés' death, to Francisco Verdugo, a brother-in-law of Velasquez. He was an honorable cavalier, and not privy to their design. But they had little doubt that he would acquiesce in the command thus in a manner forced upon him, and this would secure them the protection of the governor of Cuba, who, indeed, from his own hatred of Cortés, would be disposed to look with a lenient eye on their proceedings.

The conspirators even went so far as to appoint the subordinate officers, an *alguacil mayor* in place of Sandoval, a quartermaster-general to succeed Olid, and some others.² The time fixed for the execution of the plot was soon after the return of Cortés from his expedition. A parcel, pretended to have come by a fresh arrival from Castile, was to be presented to him while at table, and, when he was engaged in breaking open the letters, the conspirators were to fall on him and his officers and despatch them with their poniards. Such was the iniquitous scheme devised for the destruction of Cortés and the expedition. But a conspiracy, to be successful, especially when numbers are concerned, should allow but little time to elapse between its conception and its execution.

On the day previous to that appointed for the perpetration of the deed, one of the party, feeling a natural compunction at the commission of the crime, went to the general's quarters and solicited a private interview with him. He threw himself at his commander's feet, and revealed all the particulars relating to the conspiracy, adding that in Villafañá's possession a paper would be found, containing the names of his accomplices. Cortés, thunderstruck at the disclosure, lost not a moment in profiting by it. He sent for Alvarado, Sandoval, and one or two other officers marked out by the conspirator, and, after communicating the affair to them, went at once with

² "Haziã Alguazil mayor é Alférez, y Alcaldes, y Regidores, y Contador, y Tesorero, y Ueedor, y otras cosas deste arte, y aun repartido entre ellos nuestros bienes, y cauallos." Bernal Díaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 146.

them to Villafañá's quarters, attended by four alguacils.

They found him in conference with three or four friends, who were instantly taken from the apartment and placed in custody. Villafañá, confounded at this sudden apparition of his commander, had barely time to snatch a paper, containing the signatures of the confederates, from his bosom, and attempt to swallow it. But Cortés arrested his arm, and seized the paper. As he glanced his eye rapidly over the fatal list, he was much moved at finding there the names of more than one who had some claim to consideration in the army. He tore the scroll in pieces, and ordered Villafañá to be taken into custody. He was immediately tried by a military court hastily got together, at which the general himself presided. There seems to have been no doubt of the man's guilt. He was condemned to death, and, after allowing him time for confession and absolution, the sentence was executed by hanging him from the window of his own quarters.³

Those ignorant of the affair were astonished at the spectacle; and the remaining conspirators were filled with consternation when they saw that their plot was detected, and anticipated a similar fate for themselves. But they were mistaken. Cortés pursued the matter no further. A little reflection convinced him that to do so would involve him in the most disagreeable, and even dangerous, per-

³ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 146.—Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., lib. 33, cap. 48.—Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 1.

plexities. And, however much the parties implicated in so foul a deed might deserve death, he could ill afford the loss even of the guilty, with his present limited numbers. He resolved, therefore, to content himself with the punishment of the ringleader.

He called his troops together, and briefly explained to them the nature of the crime for which Villafañã had suffered. He had made no confession, he said, and the guilty secret had perished with him. He then expressed his sorrow that any should have been found in their ranks capable of so base an act, and stated his own unconsciousness of having wronged any individual among them; but, if he had done so, he invited them frankly to declare it, as he was most anxious to afford them all the redress in his power.⁴ But there was no one of his audience, whatever might be his grievances, who cared to enter his complaint at such a moment; least of all were the conspirators willing to do so, for they were too happy at having, as they fancied, escaped detection, to stand forward now in the ranks of the malecontents. The affair passed off, therefore, without further consequences.

The conduct of Cortés in this delicate conjuncture shows great coolness, and knowledge of human nature. Had he suffered his detection, or even his suspicion, of the guilty parties to take air, it would have placed him in hostile relations with them for the rest of his life. It was a disclosure of this kind, in the early part of Louis the Eleventh's

⁴ Herrera, *Hist. general*, ubi supra.

reign, to which many of the troubles of his later years were attributed.⁵ The mask once torn away, there is no longer occasion to consult even appearances. The door seems to be closed against reform. The alienation, which might have been changed by circumstances or conciliated by kindness, settles into a deep and deadly rancor. And Cortés would have been surrounded by enemies in his own camp more implacable than those in the camp of the Aztecs.

As it was, the guilty soldiers had suffered too serious apprehensions to place their lives hastily in a similar jeopardy. They strove, on the contrary, by demonstrations of loyalty, and the assiduous discharge of their duties, to turn away suspicion from themselves. Cortés, on his part, was careful to preserve his natural demeanor, equally removed from distrust and—what was perhaps more difficult—that studied courtesy which intimates, quite as plainly, suspicion of the party who is the object of it. To do this required no little address. Yet he did not forget the past. He had, it is true, destroyed the scroll containing the list of the conspirators. But the man that has once learned the names of those who have conspired against his life has no need of a written record to keep them fresh in his memory. Cortés kept his eye on all their movements, and took care to place them in no

⁵ So says M. de Barante in his picturesque *rifacimento* of the ancient chronicles: “Les procès du connétable et de monsieur de Nemours, bien d’autres révélations, avaient fait éclater leur mauvais vouloir, ou du moins leur peu de fidélité pour le roi; ils ne pouvaient donc douter qu’il désirât ou complotât leur ruine.” *Histoire des Ducs de Bourgogne* (Paris, 1838), tom. xi. p. 169.

situation, afterwards, where they could do him injury.⁶

This attempt on the life of their commander excited a strong sensation in the army, with whom his many dazzling qualities and brilliant military talents had made him a general favorite. They were anxious to testify their reprobation of so foul a deed, coming from their own body, and they felt the necessity of taking some effectual measures for watching over the safety of one with whom their own destinies, as well as the fate of the enterprise, were so intimately connected. It was arranged, therefore, that he should be provided with a guard of soldiers, who were placed under the direction of a trusty cavalier named Antonio de Quiñones. They constituted the general's body-guard during the rest of the campaign, watching over him day and night, and protecting him from domestic treason no less than from the sword of the enemy.

As was stated at the close of the last chapter, the Spaniards, on their return to quarters, found the construction of the brigantines completed, and that they were fully rigged, equipped, and ready for service. The canal, also, after having occupied eight thousand men for nearly two months, was finished.

It was a work of great labor; for it extended half a league in length, was twelve feet wide, and as many deep. The sides were strengthened by palisades of wood, or solid masonry. At intervals, dams and locks were constructed, and part of the

⁶ "Y desde allí adelante, aunque mostraua gran voluntad á las personas que eran en la cõjuraciõ, siempre se rezelaua dellos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 146.

opening was through the hard rock. By this avenue the brigantines might now be safely introduced on the lake.⁷

Cortés was resolved that so auspicious an event should be celebrated with due solemnity. On the 28th of April, the troops were drawn up under arms, and the whole population of Tezcuco assembled to witness the ceremony. Mass was performed, and every man in the army, together with the general, confessed and received the sacrament. Prayers were offered up by Father Olmedo, and a benediction invoked on the little navy, the first—worthy of the name—ever launched on American waters.⁸ The signal was given by the firing of a cannon, when the vessels, dropping down the canal, one after another, reached the lake in good order; and, as they emerged on its ample bosom, with music sounding, and the royal ensign of Castile proudly floating from their masts, a shout of admiration arose from the countless multitudes of spectators, which mingled with the roar of artillery and musketry from the vessels and the shore!⁹ It was a novel spectacle to the simple

⁷ Ixtlilxochitl, *Venida de los Españoles*, p. 19.—*Rel. Terc. de Cortés*, ap. Lorenzana, p. 234.—“Obra grandísima,” exclaims the Conqueror, “y mucho para ver.”—“Fuéron en guarde de estos bergantines,” adds Camargo, “mas de diez mil hombres de guerra con los maestros dellas, hasta que los armáron y echáron en el agua y laguna de Méjico, que fué obra de mucho efecto para tomarse Méjico.” *Hist. de Tlascala*, MS.

⁸ The brigantines were still to be seen, preserved, as precious memorials, long after the conquest, in the dock-yards of Mexico. Toribio, *Hist. de los Indios*, MS., Parte 1, cap. 1.

⁹ “Dada la señal, soltó la Presa, fuéron saliendo los Vergantines, sin tocar vno á otro, i apartándose por la Laguna, desplegaron las Vanderas, tocó la Música, disparáron su Artillería, respondió la del

natives; and they gazed with wonder on the gallant ships, which, fluttering like sea-birds on their snowy pinions, bounded lightly over the waters, as if rejoicing in their element. It touched the stern hearts of the Conquerors with a glow of rapture, and, as they felt that Heaven had blessed their undertaking, they broke forth, by general accord, into the noble anthem of the *Te Deum*. But there was no one of that vast multitude for whom the sight had deeper interest than their commander. For he looked on it as the work, in a manner, of his own hands; and his bosom swelled with exultation, as he felt he was now possessed of a power strong enough to command the lake, and to shake the haughty towers of Tenochtitlan.¹⁰

The general's next step was to muster his forces in the great square of the capital. He found they amounted to eighty-seven horse, and eight hundred and eighteen foot, of which one hundred and eighteen were arquebusiers and crossbowmen. He had three large field-pieces of iron, and fifteen lighter guns or falconets of brass.¹¹ The heavier

Exército, así de Castellanos, como de Indios." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., ubi supra.—Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 234.—Ixtlilxochitl, Venida de los Españoles, p. 19.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 48.—The last-mentioned chronicler indulges in no slight swell of exultation at this achievement of his hero, which in his opinion throws into shade the boasted exploits of the great Sesostris. "Otras muchas é notables cosas, cuenta este actor que he dicho de aqueste Rey Sessori, en que no me quiero detener, ni las tengo en tanto como esta tranchea, ó canja que es dicho, y los Vergantines de que tratamos, los quales diéron ocasion á que se oviesen mayores Thesoros é Provincias, é Reynos, que no tuvo Sessori, para la corona Real de Castilla por la industria de Hernando Cortés." Ibid., lib. 33, cap. 22.

¹¹ Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 234.

cannon had been transported from Vera Cruz to Tezcuco, a little while before, by the faithful Tlascalans. He was well supplied with shot and balls, with about ten hundred-weight of powder, and fifty thousand copper-headed arrows, made after a pattern furnished by him to the natives.¹² The number and appointments of the army much exceeded what they had been at any time since the flight from Mexico, and showed the good effects of the late arrivals from the Islands. Indeed, taking the fleet into the account, Cortés had never before been in so good a condition for carrying on his operations. Three hundred of the men were sent to man the vessels, thirteen, or rather twelve, in number, one of the smallest having been found, on trial, too dull a sailer to be of service. Half of the crews were required to navigate the ships. There was some difficulty in finding hands for this, as the men were averse to the employment. Cortés selected those who came from Palos, Moguer, and other maritime towns, and, notwithstanding their frequent claims of exemption, as *hidalgos*, from this menial occupation, he pressed them into the service.¹³ Each vessel mounted a piece of heavy ordnance, and was placed under an officer of respectability, to whom Cortés gave a general code of in-

¹² Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 147.

¹³ Bernal Diaz, *Hist. de la Conquista*, ubi supra.—*Hidalguía*, besides its legal privileges, brought with it some fanciful ones to its possessor; if, indeed, it be considered a privilege to have excluded him from many a humble, but honest, calling, by which the poor man might have gained his bread. (For an amusing account of these, see Doblado's *Letters from Spain*, let. 2.) In no country has the *poor gentleman* afforded so rich a theme for the satirist, as the writings of Le Sage, Cervantes, and Lope de Vega abundantly show.

structions for the government of the little navy, of which he proposed to take the command in person.

He had already sent to his Indian confederates, announcing his purpose of immediately laying siege to Mexico, and called on them to furnish their promised levies within the space of ten days at furthest. The Tlascalans he ordered to join him in Tezcuco; the others were to assemble at Chalco, a more convenient place of rendezvous for the operations in the southern quarter of the Valley. The Tlascalans arrived within the time prescribed, led by the younger Xicotencatl, supported by Chichimecatl, the same doughty warrior who had convoyed the brigantines to Tezcuco. They came fifty thousand strong, according to Cortés,¹⁴ making a brilliant show with their military finery, and marching proudly forward under the great national banner, emblazoned with a spread eagle, the arms of the republic.¹⁵ With as blithe and manly a step as if they were going to the battle-ground, they defiled through the gates of the capital, making its walls ring with the friendly shouts of "Castile and Tlascala."

¹⁴ "Y los Capitanes de Tascaltecal con toda su gente, muy lúcida, y bien armada, . . . y segun la cuenta, que los Capitanes nos diéron, pasaban de cinquenta mil Hombres de Guerra." (Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 236.) "I toda la Gente," adds Herrera, "tardó tres Dias en entrar, segun en sus Memoriales dice Alonso de Ojeda, ni con ser Tezcuco tan gran Ciudad, cabian en ella." Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 13.

¹⁵ "Y sus vāderas tēdidas, y el aue blāca q̄ tienen por armas, q̄ parece águila, con sus alas tendidas." (Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 149.) A spread eagle of gold, Clavigero considers as the arms of the republic. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 145.) But, as Bernal Diaz speaks of it as "white," it may have been the white heron, which belonged to the house of Xicotencatl.

The observations which Cortés had made in his late tour of reconnoissance had determined him to begin the siege by distributing his forces into three separate camps, which he proposed to establish at the extremities of the principal causeways. By this arrangement the troops would be enabled to move in concert on the capital, and be in the best position to intercept its supplies from the surrounding country. The first of these points was Tacuba, commanding the fatal causeway of the *noche triste*. This was assigned to Pedro de Alvarado, with a force consisting, according to Cortés' own statement, of thirty horse, one hundred and sixty-eight Spanish infantry, and five-and-twenty thousand Tlascalans. Cristóval de Olid had command of the second army, of much the same magnitude, which was to take up its position at Cojohuacan, the city, it will be remembered, overlooking the short causeway connected with that of Iztapalapan. Gonzalo de Sandoval had charge of the third division, of equal strength with each of the two preceding, but which was to draw its Indian levies from the forces assembled at Chalco. This officer was to march on Iztapalapan and complete the destruction of that city, begun by Cortés soon after his entrance into the Valley. It was too formidable a post to remain in the rear of the army. The general intended to support the attack with his brigantines, after which the subsequent movements of Sandoval would be determined by circumstances.¹⁶

¹⁶ The precise amount of each division, as given by Cortés, was,—in that of Alvarado, 30 horse, 168 Castilian infantry, and 25,000 Tlas-

Having announced his intended dispositions to his officers, the Spanish commander called his troops together, and made one of those brief and stirring harangues with which he was wont on great occasions to kindle the hearts of his soldiery. "I have taken the last step," he said; "I have brought you to the goal for which you have so long panted. A few days will place you before the gates of Mexico,—the capital from which you were driven with so much ignominy. But we now go forward under the smiles of Providence. Does any one doubt it? Let him but compare our present condition with that in which we found ourselves not twelve months since, when, broken and dispirited, we sought shelter within the walls of Tlascalala; nay, with that in which we were but a few months since, when we took up our quarters in Tezcuco."¹⁷ Since that time our strength has been nearly doubled. We are fighting the battles of the Faith, fighting for our honor, for riches, for revenge. I have brought you face to face with your foe. It is for you to do the rest."¹⁸

The address of the bold chief was answered by

calans; in that of Olid, 33 horse, 178 infantry, 20,000 Tlascalans; and in Sandoval's, 24 horse, 167 infantry, 30,000 Indians. (Rel. Terc., ap. Lorenzana, p. 236.) Diaz reduces the number of native troops to one-third. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.

¹⁷ "Que se alegrassen, y esforzassen mucho, pues que veian, que nuestro Señor nos encaminaba para haber victoria de nuestros Enemigos: porque bien sabian, que quando habiamos entrado en Tesaico, no habiamos trahido mas de quarenta de Caballo, y que Dios nos habia socorrido mejor, que lo habiamos pensado." Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 235.

¹⁸ Oviedo expands what he nevertheless calls the "brebe é substancial oracion" of Cortés into treble the length of it as found in the general's own pages; in which he is imitated by most of the other chroniclers. Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 22.

the thundering acclamations of his followers, who declared that every man would do his duty under such a leader; and they only asked to be led against the enemy.¹⁹ Cortés then caused the regulations for the army, published at Tlascala, to be read again to the troops, with the assurance that they should be enforced to the letter.

It was arranged that the Indian forces should precede the Spanish by a day's march, and should halt for their confederates on the borders of the Tezcucan territory. A circumstance occurred soon after their departure which gave bad augury for the future. A quarrel had arisen in the camp at Tezcuco between a Spanish soldier and a Tlascalan chief, in which the latter was badly hurt. He was sent back to Tlascala, and the matter was hushed up, that it might not reach the ears of the general, who, it was known, would not pass it over lightly. Xicotencatl was a near relative of the injured party, and on the first day's halt he took the opportunity to leave the army, with a number of his followers, and set off for Tlascala. Other causes are assigned for his desertion.²⁰ It is certain that from the first he had looked on the expedition with

¹⁹ "Y con estas últimas palabras cesó; y todos respondieron sin discrepancia, é á una voce dicentes: Sirvanse Dios y el Emperador nuestro Señor de tan buen capitan, y de nosotros, que así lo harémos todos como quien somos, y como se debe esperar de buenos Españoles, y con tanta voluntad, y deseo, dicho que parecia que cada hora les era perder vn año de tiempo por estar ya á las manos con los Enemigos." Oviedo, *Hist. de las Ind.*, MS., ubi supra.

²⁰ According to Diaz, the desire to possess himself of the lands of his comrade Chichimecatl, who remained with the army (*Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 150); according to Herrera, it was an amour that carried him home. (*Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17.) Both and all agree on the chief's aversion to the Spaniards and to the war.

an evil eye, and had predicted that no good would come of it. He came into it with reluctance, as, indeed, he detested the Spaniards in his heart.

His partner in the command instantly sent information of the affair to the Spanish general, still encamped at Tezcuco. Cortés, who saw at once the mischievous consequences of this defection at such a time, detached a party of Tlascalans and Tezcucan Indians after the fugitive, with instructions to prevail on him, if possible, to return to his duty. They overtook him on the road, and remonstrated with him on his conduct, contrasting it with that of his countrymen generally, and of his own father in particular, the steady friend of the white men. "So much the worse," replied the chieftain: "if they had taken my counsel, they would never have become the dupes of the perfidious strangers."²¹ Finding their remonstrances received only with anger or contemptuous taunts, the emissaries returned without accomplishing their object.

Cortés did not hesitate on the course he was to pursue. "Xicotencatl," he said, "had always been the enemy of the Spaniards, first in the field, and since in the council-chamber; openly, or in secret, still the same,—their implacable enemy. There was no use in parleying with the false-hearted Indian." He instantly despatched a small body of horse with an alguacil to arrest the chief wherever

²¹ "Y la respuesta que le embió á dezir fué, que si el viejo de su padre, y Masse Escaci le huvieran creído, que no se huvieran señoreado tanto dellos, que les haze hazer todo lo que quiere: *y por no gastar mas palabras, diro, que no queria venir.*" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.

he might be found, even though it were in the streets of Tlascala, and to bring him back to Tezcucuo. At the same time, he sent information of Xicotencatl's proceedings to the Tlascalan senate, adding that desertion among the Spaniards was punished with death.

The emissaries of Cortés punctually fulfilled his orders. They arrested the fugitive chief,—whether in Tlascala or in its neighborhood is uncertain,—and brought him a prisoner to Tezcucuo, where a high gallows, erected in the great square, was prepared for his reception. He was instantly led to the place of execution; his sentence and the cause for which he suffered were publicly proclaimed, and the unfortunate cacique expiated his offence by the vile death of a malefactor. His ample property, consisting of lands, slaves, and some gold, was all confiscated to the Castilian crown.²²

Thus perished Xicotencatl, in the flower of his age,—as dauntless a warrior as ever led an Indian

²² So says Herrera, who had in his possession the memorial of Ojeda, one of the Spaniards employed to apprehend the chieftain. (*Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17, and *Torquemada*, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 90.) Bernal Diaz, on the other hand, says that the Tlascalan chief was taken and executed on the road. (*Hist. de la Conquista*, cap. 150.) But the latter chronicler was probably absent at the time with Alvarado's division, in which he served. Solís, however, prefers his testimony, on the ground that Cortés would not have hazarded the execution of Xicotencatl before the eyes of his own troops. (*Conquista*, lib. 5, cap. 19.) But the Tlascalans were already well on their way towards Tacuba. A very few only could have remained in Tezcucuo, which was occupied by the citizens and the Castilian army,—neither of them very likely to interfere in the prisoner's behalf. His execution there would be an easier matter than in the territory of Tlascala, which he had probably reached before his apprehension.

army to battle. He was the first chief who successfully resisted the arms of the invaders; and, had the natives of Anahuac, generally, been animated with a spirit like his, Cortés would probably never have set foot in the capital of Montezuma. He was gifted with a clearer insight into the future than his countrymen; for he saw that the European was an enemy far more to be dreaded than the Aztec. Yet, when he consented to fight under the banner of the white men, he had no right to desert it, and he incurred the penalty prescribed by the code of savage as well as of civilized nations. It is said, indeed, that the Tlascalcan senate aided in apprehending him, having previously answered Cortés that his crime was punishable with death by their own laws.²³ It was a bold act, however, thus to execute him in the midst of his people. For he was a powerful chief, heir to one of the four seigniories of the republic. His chivalrous qualities made him popular, especially with the younger part of his countrymen; and his garments were torn into shreds at his death and distributed as sacred relics among them. Still, no resistance was offered to the execution of the sentence, and no commotion followed it. He was the only Tlascalcan who ever swerved from his loyalty to the Spaniards.

According to the plan of operations settled by Cortés, Sandoval, with his division, was to take a southern direction, while Alvarado and Olid would make the northern circuit of the lakes. These two

²³ Herrera, *Hist. general*, dec. 3, lib. 1, cap. 17.—Torquemada, *Monarch. Ind.*, lib. 4, cap. 90.

cavaliers, after getting possession of Tacuba, were to advance to Chapoltepec and demolish the great aqueduct there, which supplied Mexico with water. On the tenth of May they commenced their march; but at Acolman, where they halted for the night, a dispute arose between the soldiers of the two divisions, respecting their quarters. From words they came to blows, and a defiance was even exchanged between the leaders, who entered into the angry feelings of their followers.²⁴ Intelligence of this was soon communicated to Cortés, who sent at once to the fiery chiefs, imploring them, by their regard for him and the common cause, to lay aside their differences, which must end in their own ruin and that of the expedition. His remonstrance prevailed, at least, so far as to establish a show of reconciliation between the parties. But Olid was not a man to forget, or easily to forgive; and Alvarado, though frank and liberal, had an impatient temper much more easily excited than appeased. They were never afterwards friends.²⁵

The Spaniards met with no opposition on their march. The principal towns were all abandoned

²⁴ "Y sobre ello ya auíamos echado mano á las armas los de nuestra Capitanía contra los de Christóval de Oli, y aun los Capitanes desafiados." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.*

²⁵ Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 150.—Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 237.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 130.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 22.

* [As they were approaching the town, Olid sent a squad of soldiers ahead to secure quarters. When Alvarado entered he found every house in the place already decorated with the green branch upon its roof, which indicated that it was already occupied. According to Bancroft, Alvarado and Olid began their march on the 22d of May. He insists that Prescott was misled by an error in Cortés, Cartas, 208.—M.]

by the inhabitants, who had gone to strengthen the garrison of Mexico, or taken refuge with their families among the mountains. Tacuba was in like manner deserted, and the troops once more established themselves in their old quarters in the lordly city of the Tepanecs.²⁶

Their first undertaking was to cut off the pipes that conducted the water from the royal streams of Chapoltepec to feed the numerous tanks and fountains which sparkled in the court-yards of the capital. The aqueduct, partly constructed of brickwork and partly of stone and mortar, was raised on a strong though narrow dike, which transported it across an arm of the lake; and the whole work was one of the most pleasing monuments of Mexican civilization. The Indians, well aware of its importance, had stationed a large body of troops for its protection. A battle followed, in which both sides suffered considerably, but the Spaniards were victorious. A part of the aqueduct was demolished, and during the siege no water found its way again to the capital through this channel.

On the following day the combined forces descended on the fatal causeway, to make themselves masters, if possible, of the nearest bridge. They

²⁶ The Tepanec capital, shorn of its ancient splendors, is now only interesting from its historic associations. "These plains of Tacuba," says the spirited author of "Life in Mexico," "once the theatre of fierce and bloody conflicts, and where, during the siege of Mexico, Alvarado 'of the leap' fixed his camp, now present a very tranquil scene. Tacuba itself is now a small village of mud huts, with some fine old trees, a very few old ruined houses, a ruined church, and some traces of a building, which _____ assured us had been the palace of their last monarch; whilst others declare it to have been the site of the Spanish encampment." Vol. i. let. 13.

found the dike covered with a swarm of warriors, as numerous as on the night of their disaster, while the surface of the lake was dark with the multitude of canoes. The intrepid Christians strove to advance under a perfect hurricane of missiles from the water and the land, but they made slow progress. Barricades thrown across the causeway embarrassed the cavalry and rendered it nearly useless. The sides of the Indian boats were fortified with bulwarks, which shielded the crews from the arquebuses and cross-bows; and, when the warriors on the dike were hard pushed by the pikemen, they threw themselves fearlessly into the water, as if it were their native element, and, reappearing along the sides of the dike, shot off their arrows and javelins with fatal execution. After a long and obstinate struggle, the Christians were compelled to fall back on their own quarters with disgrace, and—including the allies—with nearly as much damage as they had inflicted on the enemy. Olid, disgusted with the result of the engagement, inveighed against his companion as having involved them in it by his wanton temerity, and drew off his forces the next morning to his own station at Cojohuacan.

The camps, separated by only two leagues, maintained an easy communication with each other. They found abundant employment in foraging the neighboring country for provisions, and in repelling the active sallies of the enemy; on whom they took their revenge by cutting off his supplies. But their own position was precarious, and they looked with impatience for the arrival of the brigantines

under Cortés. It was in the latter part of May that Olid took up his quarters at Cojohuacan; and from that time may be dated the commencement of the siege of Mexico.²⁷

²⁷ Rel. Terc. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 237-239.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 94.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 22.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 50.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 130.—Clavigero settles this date at the day of Corpus Christi, May 30th. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 196.) But the Spaniards left Tezcuco May 10th, according to Cortés; and three weeks could not have intervened between their departure and their occupation of Cojohuacan. Clavigero disposes of this difficulty, it is true, by dating the beginning of their march on the 20th instead of the 10th of May; following the chronology of Herrera, instead of that of Cortés. Surely the general is the better authority of the two.

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